





**THE
FIGHTING SCRUB**

By RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

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JIMPSON OVER TWO SEAS (With H. P. HOLT)
FOR THE GOOD OF THE TEAM
INFIELD RIVALRS

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, Publishers, New York



THE BALL SAILED UP AND AWAY

[page 262]

THE FIGHTING SCRUB

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF "INFIELD RIVALS," "KICK FORMATION," ETC.



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THE FIGHTING SCRUB

CHAPTER I THE ROTTER

“**W**ELL, son, I guess I'd better be getting along,” said Mr. Bingham. He glanced frowningly at his watch and then across the driveway at the dusty car awaiting him. He carefully avoided looking at the boy beside him, and for that the boy was very grateful. Now that the moment for saying good-by had come Clif's spirits, which had been getting lower and lower during the past hour, had reached bottom, and he knew that his face revealed the fact. He was glad when his father went on, speaking with exaggerated cheerfulness which fooled neither of them, for there was a lump in Clif's throat and he was horribly afraid that it would make his voice sound queer. Being only sixteen years of age, he was far more fearful of displaying emotion than he would have been of facing a firing squad, and not for anything in the world would he have had his father suspect the presence of that lump!

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“It’s seventeen after two,” Mr. Bingham was continuing, “and I won’t be able to make as good time as we did coming up, I guess. Won’t make Providence much before six, probably. Got to get gas somewhere, too. Well, I’d say you were pretty nicely fixed here, son: nice room, fine buildings, lots of—of grounds, eh? And the Doctor struck me as a particularly fine sort. Not at all the type of man you—er—picture as a school principal. Got a good business head, I’d say. Well—”

Mr. Bingham looked approvingly over the scene, nodded commendingly and drew on his left-hand glove. Clif, realizing that speech was at last imperative, swallowed hard. “Don’t forget to have some air put in that left rear tire, dad,” he managed. “I think there’s a valve leak. It was all right when we left home.”

His voice sounded sort of squeaky at first, he thought, but he had it under excellent control toward the last. He hoped his father hadn’t noticed anything wrong with it.

“That’s so,” agreed Mr. Bingham heartily. “Mustn’t forget that. Don’t want to have to make a change on the road.” He turned down his glove at the wrist—he always wore just one when he drove the car, and never buttoned it—gave a final tug to his tweed cap and began the descent of the six stone steps. Clif followed, his brown hands thrust deep into the pockets of his knickers, his well-set shoulders swinging carelessly. Few fellows had arrived yet, but the car stood in plain view of many windows and it was

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up to him to affect a nonchalance he was far from feeling. Mr. Bingham climbed into the seat, glanced again at his watch and turned the switch. Clif slammed the door shut with a bang. Mr. Bingham pressed down on the starter and a low, steady hum came from under the long blue hood. "Well," he said, "let's hear from you often, Clifton."

"Yes, sir." Clif's cheerful grin tightened up harder than ever. He wondered if he would ever be able to get the idiotic expression off his face! His father's use of his full name had almost done for him. Years ago, when he was just a little kid, his father used to kiss him when they parted; even after his mother's death, when there seemed no excuse at all for it; but nowadays Mr. Bingham said "Clifton" instead, and they both understood. And now he had gone and done it again, and Clif's throat felt worse than ever and his eyes felt smarty and—gosh, he wished dad would hurry up and go!

Perhaps dad suspected further delay might prove dangerous, for he suddenly reached his ungloved hand over the top of the door and said very gruffly, "So long, son! Be a good chap!" And Clif returned the tight grasp and nodded silently, and the big touring car purred more loudly for an instant and swept off down the blue gravel driveway and in a twinkling became just a moving shadow between the trunks of the trees where the drive curved to the gate. Clifton Cobb Bingham watched it disappear, waved a gayly negligent hand—although the lone occupant of the car never once looked

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around—and then, that frozen grin still on his face, lounged back across the gravel to the entrance of West Hall. Probably, he was reflecting, not a soul had watched that parting, but it wouldn't do to take chances, and so he played the rôle of stoic to the end, or, rather, as far as the second step.

He was there when an object disconcertingly obtruded itself on his vision. It was a brown, rubber-soled shoe dangling from the end of an amazingly colorful golf hose. Clif's gaze darted higher and his own fixed grin was instantly reflected. Only, whereas Clif's facial contortion was designed to express ease and gayety, the countenance of the boy seated on the top step unquestionably indicated derision. The fellow hadn't been there when Clif had followed his father to the car, but he must have appeared soon after, for his countenance said as plainly as words could have said it: "You didn't fool me! Almost cried, didn't you? Couldn't even say good-by to him! Gee, what a baby! Huh!"

Clif's grin vanished. With one foot on the next step above, he stood stock still and glared back at the boy. He felt outraged, degraded and very, very angry. The other stared steadily, maliciously back at him. Clif's hands closed and tightened. Then:

"Go on," he demanded, his voice low and tight. "Go on and say it!"

The other only chuckled mirthlessly, still staring.

"You—you confounded spy!" said Clif. "You might find something better to do than sneak around,

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sticking your nose into other folks' business, I should think!"

The other boy's grin faded perceptibly, but his look, if it held less of amusement, was still dark with malice. "Oh, shut up!" he answered listlessly. "Go on in and have a good cry. You'll feel better."

"You get up from there and I'll teach you a lesson in manners," cried Clif. He plunged up the intervening steps and stood threateningly above his enemy. The latter looked up almost eagerly.

"Mean it?" he asked.

"Get up!" thundered Clif.

But the momentary gleam of animation faded in the face below and the boy shook his head. "Can't be done," he said regretfully. "I've got a date with one of the instructors at two-thirty, and it's twenty-eight after. How about to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" jeered Clif. "You're scared!"

"You bet I am, but not of you," answered the other dispiritedly. "I'm scared of Mr. Wyatt. Met him yet?"

Clif shook his head, suspiciously. "No, but what's he got to do with—with you getting your nose punched?"

"Plenty," was the gloomy reply. "He's the English shark here, and he's going to give me the third degree and tell me whether I stick around or beat it home again. I'm a total loss at English. This Wyatt guy's the old man's nephew or something and he's a tartar, they say. Well, figure it out for yourself.

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I'm going to be up against it, anyway, but if I bust in on him all smeared up with your gore it's going to make it a heap worse, isn't it?"

Clif scowled in puzzlement. His wrath was melting fast, and the fact made him feel rather ridiculous. He unclenched his hands, thrust them into his pockets and summoned a note of contempt. "I hope he kicks you out," he declared. But the words lacked conviction. The fact was that the strange chap, in spite of his behavior and in spite of the detestation in which Clif held him, sort of worked on your sympathies! Now he nodded agreement.

"Yes, I guess maybe that would be best," he said. He arose slowly, with a deep sigh, and stared morosely over the wide stretch of lawn that, beyond a single formal bed of scarlet geraniums and coleuses, led from the school building to the village road. Clif watched him frowningly. A straight bodied, finely built chap, and, to an unprejudiced observer, extremely good-looking, with hair that held a glint of bronze where the sun reached it, deeply tanned skin, dark gray eyes, a short nose and a rather assertive chin. If, thought Clif, the fellow wasn't such a rotter—

Then the rotter turned and looked moodily at him. "You might wish me luck, you know."

Clif laughed ironically.

"Because," the other went on as he moved toward the wide doorway, "if he turns me down I'll be out of this dump in an hour. If he doesn't I'll see you in the morning. By the way, where do I find you?"

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"I'm in 17 West Hall, and my name's Bingham."

"My name's Kemble. Glad to know you. Well, see you again."

He straightened his shoulders in the manner of a condemned man starting for the gallows and disappeared indoors. Clif looked after him, frowning in puzzlement for an instant, and then followed. Beyond the reception room a wide flight of slate stairs curved to the second floor, and up it Clif made his way, his footsteps arousing tiny echoes in the silent building. In the second floor corridor one or two doors stood open, but so far he had the Hall almost to himself. His door was the fourth on the right. On the oaken panel was an oval disk of white enamel bearing the number 17. Beneath it were two small brass slots, in one of which a somewhat yellowed visiting card indicated that Mr. Walter Harrison Treat dwelt within. Mr. Treat was not within at present, however, for when Clif swung the door shut behind him he was the sole occupant of the room.

His father had thought well of the apartment, but Clif was not so pleased with it. It was large enough and nicely furnished, but, although it contained two windows, it was on the inner side of the building, close to the angle formed by the junction of West and Middle Halls, and the view was confined to the courtyard. At Wyndham everything save the gymnasium was under one roof, an advantage emphasized by the school advertisements. The original structure, now known as Middle Hall, formed the nucleus of the present plant.

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Within a year or two of each other, East Hall and West Hall had been erected to connect with either end of the old building. The three halls formed as many sides of a quadrangle, with the opening toward the front and the space between affording a seldom used approach to Middle Hall flanked by turf and shrubbery. This space was Clif's outlook from Number 17. The grass was smooth and well kept, the shrubs neatly trimmed, the blue gravel newly raked, but Clif wondered if one wouldn't get a bit tired of that restricted view after a while. Of course, it was possible to look up and see blue sky above the slate roof of the opposite Hall; and three pigeons, sunning themselves and conversing throatily across the way, offered momentary interest; but Clif would have preferred a wider outlook. Besides, since the windows faced the east, the room promised to be rather dark after midday. In fact, away from the windows it was already shadowed.

In the shrubbery along the farther side of the courtyard a gang of noisy sparrows were chasing each other about, plump, truculent roisterers who squabbled and fought for no apparent reason. Beyond them the ivy along the lower wall of the three-story stone building was still green and varnished looking. Some of the ambitious tendrils were well above the second line of windows over there. Clif's gaze wandered toward the front of the building and was captured by a moving flash of color at an open window. It was a bit of yellow silk curtain that swayed beyond the frame in the stirring of a languid breeze. Clif was viewing that

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window at an angle, but the room beyond was flooded by sunlight and so much of it as was within his range of vision was visible in detail. He could see the end of a couch tapestried in blue and brown, the corner of a bookcase, a picture on a wall. But what interested him far more was the object that occupied most of the foreground.

That object was his late adversary, Kemble. Even across the width of the courtyard Clif read in attitude and countenance dejection and perplexity. It wasn't difficult for the observer to complete the scene from imagination. Kemble was seated at one side of a table. Across from him, wearing, doubtless, a look of stern yet patient displeasure, sat the Mr. Wyatt of whom he had so feelingly spoken. In short, Clif was viewing his enemy in the throes of an inquiry into his knowledge of English!

For the moment Clif's emotion was one of unmixed delight. Retribution had overtaken the hated foe! Then, however, his feeling of triumph waned—gave way before a faint stirring of sympathy. Even if the fellow was a blighter he deserved some pity under such conditions, and, besides, simple *esprit de corps* demanded that Clif should align himself on the side of the oppressed fellow student rather than with that enemy body the Faculty! For a minute longer he looked and then turned away. To-morrow, he told himself, he would hold Kemble to strict accountability, but meanwhile he was "rooting" hard for that suffering youth and for the confusion of the tyrant.

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Away from the window, he gave his attention to the room and its possibilities. It was furnished with two metal beds, two fumed-oak chiffoniers, four chairs, of which two were straight-backed and two of the variety known as morris, and a good-sized study table. There was, besides, a cushioned bench under each window. The prevailing color was brown. The furniture was dark brown, the walls were light brown and a heavy brown linoleum covered the floor. On the latter were spread three medium brown rugs with dark blue borders. Only the ceiling of creamy white and the bedspreads of a chalkier hue offered relief from the general scheme. Even the side curtains at the windows and the corduroy of the seat cushions were brown. On the whole, though, the room was rather pleasing, save for the single exception of lack of light, and, when Clif had switched the electricity on, even that failing disappeared. The two closets, one at each side of the door, were of generous size and held such conveniences as a shelf for shoes, a rod for hangers and a trousers rack on the door. Oh, he guessed it wasn't so bad, after all!

And at the moment of reaching this conclusion there was a commotion at the front of the building, telling him that the first wholesale influx of students had begun. There was the sound of voices, the *chug chugging* of motors, the thud of bags. Then came the shuffle of feet on the stone stairs, and laughter and whistling. Don turned off the illumination, wondering if Walter Harrison Treat had arrived with the present

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contingent. Naturally, he felt some curiosity about Mr. Treat. There were voices in the corridor now, and doors opened and banged shut. Clif retreated to a window seat, took one foot in his hands—noting approvingly that the brown leather shoe chimed in harmoniously with the surroundings—and waited. Then the door of Number 17 opened, swinging inward leisurely and with a certain dignity, and the end of an immaculate black suit case came into sight.

CHAPTER II

GETTING ACQUAINTED

A BOY of seventeen followed the suit case, and the first occupant of Number 17 sighed with relief. Walter Harrison Treat looked more than possible as a roommate. He was fairly tall, rather thin, wore excellent but unobtrusive clothes and observed Clif with sober inquiry through a pair of spectacles. Being made with a very light gold frame, the spectacles were not especially apparent, and a second relieved sigh escaped Clif. It would have been a horrible thing had Treat worn those staring, tortoise-shell contraptions. Clif was certain he could never live through the school year with a pair of mandarin spectacles!

They shook hands, Clif with warmth, Walter with a polite reserve that the other soon learned to be natural with him. Then they talked, carefully avoiding apparent interest in each other's affairs. Even so, however, certain facts regarding Walter were laid bare. He lived in Boston. Well, not exactly *in* Boston, you understand, but just outside; West Newton, to be exact. This was his third year here. He had entered as a Junior. Last year he had roomed in East Hall. He thought he might like this better, as it seemed quieter. Over there, the Juniors had the first and second floors

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and were a noisy lot. He was a third classman this year. By rights he should be in the second class, but he had begun school late, owing to illness when he was thirteen. What did Clif think of the school?

Presently they selected beds, closets, chiffoniers, window seats and chairs at the study table, choosing alternately after Clif, at Walter's insistence, had spoken first. Then Clif started unpacking, and Walter, whose trunk had not yet arrived, took himself off to report at the Office. Twenty minutes sufficed to transfer the contents of trunk and bag to drawers and closet, and then, since Walter had not returned, Clif slipped his coat on again and went downstairs. The scene below had changed since he had last viewed it. Boys congregated thickly about the Office, wandered in and out of the recreation room, and liberally sprinkled themselves over the steps outside. Clif went out and perched himself near the bottom of the flight. It was not so warm now. He looked at his watch. Twenty minutes to four. His father would be somewhere about Hartford, he guessed; that is, barring trouble with that soft tire. He hoped there had been no trouble, for his father usually left tire changing to him. Clif smiled. He guessed his father would make pretty hard work of putting on a new tire! Then the smile faded. He was going to miss his father a good deal, he told himself. They had been together so much, that it seemed strange to think that he wasn't to see him again for a fortnight. He guessed his father would miss him, too. Maybe it was going to be harder for dad than for him!

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He wondered why he had decided on Wyndham, when there were so many schools near home which he could have attended as a day student. Well, that was just the reason, wasn't it? They had both thought it would be better if he went far enough away so that he would get the benefit of school life. "You pick the place yourself, son," Mr. Bingham had said. "I don't care what the price is, only see that you get your money's worth." And so, after months of indecision during which he had perused a veritable library of prospectuses and catalogues, Clif had chosen the John Wyatt Wyndham Preparatory School for Boys for no better reason than that while looking through the program of last year's Brown and Dartmouth game he had paused at a half-tone picture of a clean, earnest looking youth in football togs and idly read the lines beneath it:

"E. W. Langley, Jr., End. Class of 1923, age 21, weight 169, height 5 ft. 11 in. Cooperstown, N. Y. Prepared at Wyndham School."

Clif had watched "Wuzzy" Langley play football, and "Wuzzy" had become very close to hero size in Clif's estimation, and it seemed to him that a school that could turn out fellows like "Wuzzy," fellows who played wonderful football and whose names were synonymous with all that was clean and healthy and manly, was exactly the school he was looking for. That evening he told his father that he had decided

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on a school, and Mr. Bingham, after learning his reason for choosing Wyndham, gravely agreed that he had undoubtedly made a wise selection. If Mr. Bingham was secretly amused he didn't show it. So Clif wrote for literature and studied it interestedly. Even if the description and pictures sent to him had been disappointing he would still have gone to Wyndham, but they weren't. On the contrary, what he read increased his enthusiasm, and after that, until he received assurance from "J. Coles, Secretary," that he had been admitted, he was on tenterhooks.

It wasn't until close to the time for departure that the thought of being separated from his father began to dampen his pleasure of anticipation. There were days, toward the last, when he would have backed down had Mr. Bingham given him the slightest encouragement. Keeping on at high school seemed plenty good enough then. But Mr. Bingham kept on smiling cheerfully and the fatal day grew nearer and nearer and—then one September morning they were speeding off in the car, Clif's trunk in the tonneau, and the die was cast.

Clif's somewhat doleful reminiscences were broken into by the tooting of a motor horn down the drive, and a big blue bus rolled past to East Hall and disgorged nearly a score of very small, very noisy boys. "The infant class has arrived," said a youth behind Clif. A second bus paused at West Hall and a dozen or so older fellows went crowding past, bag laden, exchanging greetings. A load of trunks passed around

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the side of the wing. The tall clock in the reception room chimed out four o'clock. Another automobile, a hired vehicle, crowded to the steps and four more laughing, sun-browned fellows piled out of it and dragged suit cases and bags to the gravel while one of the number haggled amusingly with the driver. When the new arrivals had disappeared inside Clif remembered Kemble and wondered if that objectionable youth had been released from his session with Mr. Wyatt, and, if he had, whether he was even now preparing for his exodus. Judging from the expression Clif had seen on his face, Kemble's chance of remaining at Wyndham was mighty slim! Well, Clif guessed the school would be well rid of him. Fellows who hadn't the common decency to mind their own affairs and—and didn't know any better than to sit and gloat over another chap's—another chap's—well, embarrassment, weren't wanted at a school like Wyndham. No, sir! Only—well, when you came to think of it, it was sort of tough to get turned down like that. And the fellow was kind of nice looking, too; and there had been something about him. Sort of—sort of appealing. Or—or something. Oh, well, Clif didn't wish him any ill luck. If they let him stay it wouldn't make any difference to Clif. There'd be room enough for both of them in a school that looked after a hundred and ninety fellows!

Presently he got up and climbed the stairs again to Number 17. Walter Treat's trunk had arrived and he was unpacking. Clif sat down on a window seat and

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watched. Walter was astonishingly methodical and particular. It took him many minutes to dispose of a couple of dozen collars to his liking in the left-hand top drawer of his chiffonier, and he rearranged his five pairs of shoes exactly three times along the bottom shelf of his closet. Clif began to wonder if he was going to like Walter Treat, after all. Conversation was desultory, consisting mainly of questions from Clif and answers from Walter. The latter was parsimonious of information, then and ever after. It seemed to be Walter's philosophy to never offer anything not asked for and then to give as little as possible of it. But by dint of questioning Clif managed to elicit information regarding school customs and rules which he stood in need of; information regarding the hours for meals, the location of class rooms, the time of rising and so on. With his father—they had reached Freeburg at half-past twelve and had luncheon at the Inn before proceeding to the school—Clif had been conducted through the buildings by one of the faculty and had everything shown and explained. But there were certain details that Mr. Frost, Latin instructor and Assistant to the Principal, had neglected, and it was these that Clif now obtained, not without difficulty, from Walter.

“What sort of a chap is this Mr. McKnight?” Clif inquired. “He's my adviser, you know.”

“‘Lovey’? Not a bad sort. He's Chem.”

“Yes, I know, but is he—is he a young man or a fossil?”

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“About twenty-eight, I believe. Haven’t seen him yet?”

“No, I’ve got a date at seven-thirty to fix up my schedule. I’m glad he’s youngish. And how about Wyatt?”

“You won’t like him. ‘Alick’s’ a tartar. But you won’t have him more than four hours a week. He’s English Lit.”

“Do you have McKnight, too?”

“For adviser? No, ‘Cheese’ is my ‘nurse.’ He’s French. You don’t have him until next year.”

“Is Cheese his real name, or—”

“Parks, Charles Parks. They call him ‘Charlie’ sometimes.”

“Do they all have pet names?” asked Clif.

“Naturally. There’s ‘Old Brad’ and ‘Lovey’ and ‘Pink’ and ‘Cocky’—and ‘Wim’—”

“Who’s ‘Cocky’?”

“Babcock, Physical Director and Hygiene. ‘Wim’s’ Head of the Junior School. It’s run separate, you know. Then there’s ‘The Turk’ and—” But possibly Walter realized that he was offering unsolicited information, for he stopped short, selected a towel from a neat pile in a lower drawer and made for the lavatory. Clif hugged a knee and watched the shadows creep across the courtyard. Life didn’t look promising to him just then. This fellow Treat—well, Clif didn’t believe he was going to find him just what his name implied. Sort of a “frozen-face,” he seemed. Maybe you were like that if you came from Boston. Still,

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there had been a corking chap at the beach last month who had hailed from the Hub, too. Too bad he wasn't to have Benson for a pal instead of Walter Treat. Even that cheeky Kemble was more—more human, Clif grudgingly acknowledged. He got up and sent a difficult look toward Mr. Wyatt's window. It was empty now and the room was full of shadows. His watch proclaimed four-forty. There remained, then, an hour and twenty minutes before dinner—no, supper. Funny scheme, having supper in the evening and dinner at midday. He didn't suppose he was going to like that at first. Well, there were probably plenty of other things he wouldn't like any better! He guessed there wasn't any school that was as nice as a fellow's own home. Thinking of the square, brick house back in Providence made him feel decidedly unhappy. Pretty soon—well, not yet, but in another two or three hours—the lights would come out all over the city, and from the window of his room up there on the hill it was like looking down on fairyland. Sophie would be trotting to the front door about now, looking for the evening paper. She always got it first and took it back to the pantry and read the love story and the beauty hints before any one else could get hold of it. And pretty soon dad would come walking up the hill, the Boston financial paper held in one gloved hand, his silver-knobbed stick in the other—no, he wouldn't either; not this evening. Clif looked at his watch again. His father ought to be somewhere around Willimantic now; maybe further; he had a way of “stepping on it” when

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the road was clear that was a caution! Clif wished mightily that he was in that softly purring car this minute!

Walter came back, looking annoyingly virtuous for having washed up, and Clif said he guessed he'd walk around a bit. He would have been glad if Walter had offered to accompany him, as little as that youth's society would have appealed to him under other circumstances, but Walter didn't offer. He just said "Yes," in that irritatingly noncommittal way of his. Clif took up his cap and went out and down the stairs and so, presently, into the late sunshine. Well, it was a heap better than that gloomy room, he told himself, and the threatened attack of homesickness disappeared. He walked down the drive and out at the wide gate at the corner of the grounds and on to Oak Street. He knew it was Oak Street because a neat sign told him so. The village proper began a block south with comfortable if unpretentious residences that presently merged into the business district. The hotel, the Freeburg Inn, at which they had eaten a very satisfactory luncheon, was across the wide, elm-shaded street. Beyond it was a short block of two-story brick store buildings; a busy, modern looking drug store, a hardware emporium with one window devoted to football and other sporting goods, a dry goods store, a grocery displaying a colorful array of canned fruit, a real-estate and insurance office. There were more stores on the other side, and then, at the corner, the Town Hall; and the library beyond that, where the street branched

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and a tiny patch of park surrounded a memorial fountain. At the apex of the junction a small fire house offered, through a wide doorway, an arresting glimpse of red paint and shining brass. Clif paused to look in at the apparatus, wondering why an alarm of fire never came in while a fellow was on hand to get the benefit of it! Beyond the fire house more residences bordered the quiet stretch of recently sprinkled asphalt, but they offered small interest to the boy and he crossed to the other side of Oak Street and loitered back, stopping before each window until he had exhausted its possibilities for entertainment. He managed to kill more than a half hour in this wise, and got back to West Hall about half after five to find Number 17 empty and dark. The room, however, looked quite cheerful after he had switched on the lights, and he got a magazine he had brought with him and read until a few minutes to six. He was still slicking down his wet hair when a gong clanged thrice somewhere below. He put out the lights and, suddenly aware of a very healthy appetite, set out for the dining hall.

CHAPTER III

“LOVEY” McKNIGHT

THE dining hall occupied the ground floor of the rear section of West Hall, a spacious room of oak beams and rough gray plaster, of paneled walls and many high windows. On either side, like soldiers on parade, eight white-draped tables were spaced. There was, also, a seventeenth table, but this was in the corner beyond the door that led to Middle Hall, and, whereas the other tables held twelve persons each, the seventeenth accommodated only Doctor Wyndham; Mr. Frost, his assistant; Miss Coles, the secretary; and Mrs. Flood, Junior School matron. At the head of each of the eight tables along the farther wall sat a faculty member; in Wyndham School parlance, a “fac”; and his surveillance included not only the board at which he sat but also the one directly across from it. Seats at tables bearing even numbers were much sought after since those were the ones lacking, as one might say, local government. Clif, though, wasn't aware of good fortune when he found himself seated at Table 12; beyond, that is, the good fortune of being provided a place where food was supplied.

There was nothing especially remarkable about any of his table companions, he decided after furtive study. Many of the eleven were of about his own age; three

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or four were older. One of the latter sat at the head of the board, a broadshouldered, athletic-looking fellow of possibly eighteen with good features and a pleasant, crisp voice. He didn't talk much, however. Clif mentally catalogued him as a person of importance, probably a football or crew captain. The boy on his right was thin and nervous and ate a great deal. The one on his left was neither thin nor nervous, but, or so it seemed to Clif, equally heroic with the food. Directly opposite sat a short youth with a large, square head and hair that grew erect and was very thick and coarse and black. This youth had table manners never learned from any book of etiquette, Clif thought. It was evident that the members of Table 12 were not yet well acquainted, for conversation was neither general nor frequent. Clif applied himself diligently to the matter of satisfying his appetite, finding more food than sufficient and of an excellent quality; then, having finished, made his way out again.

His course took him around the end of Table 10, and as he passed he was surprised to find himself spoken to. "Hi, Bingham," said a voice. Clif looked, expecting to see Walter Treat, but the boy who had spoken, seated at the farther side of the table, was Kemble. He waved the half of a muffin and followed his hail with: "Wait around, will you? I want to speak to you." Clif nodded and went on. So, it appeared, Kemble had survived the ordeal after all! Probably he wanted to arrange about that scrap in the morning. Evidently he was a man of his word and

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didn't intend to attempt a back-down. Clif followed some other fellows along the corridor, past the reading room and library on one side and the offices on the other, and reached the recreation room. The place appeared pretty well filled, but, after a moment's hesitation at the doorway, he saw that there were still vacant seats along the leather-cushioned bench that followed the walls from door to great stone fireplace. He picked his way between the chattering groups and found a place by one of the front windows and looked about him.

The recreation room was a big square apartment filled with chairs and couches and game tables. Already several games of chess or checkers were in progress, and Clif wondered how the players could put their minds on their problems with such a din of talk and laughter going on about them. There was one huge table in the center of the room, and from it half a dozen fellows swung their feet and took part in a loud discussion with the occupants of several clustered chairs. Clif couldn't make out what the subject under consideration was, because they all talked at once, but it was undoubtedly important since several of the assemblage were gesticulating excitedly and getting quite red of face. Clif watched for a minute or two and then turned his gaze to a checker battle being waged a few feet distant between two absorbed and silent opponents. He had become quite interested in it when some one squeezed down beside him on the bench and claimed his attention.

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“Well, I didn’t have any luck,” announced Kemble.

“How do you mean? Aren’t you going to stay?” Clif took pains to keep all trace of interest from his voice.

“That’s it,” replied Kemble. “I am. Wyatt said he ought to turn me down, but that that would be too easy on me. Said he was going to pass me and devote the next three years to letting light in on the dark places. Or something insulting like that. Anyway, I’ve got to stay.”

“But don’t you *want* to?” asked Clif, surprised.

Kemble shook his head gravely. “I don’t know. Of course I did want to when I came, but Wyatt got me scared so I was dead sure I couldn’t, and so I had it all planned to go back home. And now he’s gone and double-crossed me and I’ve got to—to readjust myself, so to say. Isn’t that the dickens?”

Clif eyed the other suspiciously. “I guess you’ll live through it,” he said coldly. “What class are you?”

“Third. You, too, I suppose.”

Clif nodded. “Funny you being shy on English. The course doesn’t look hard in the catalogue.”

“Oh, I don’t suppose it’s hard. I just never got up much interest in those guys that wrote literature. I’m pretty fair on math and Latin and history and the rest of the junk, though. Well, I’ll just have to make the best of it, I suppose. Got your schedule fixed up yet?”

“No, I’m to see Mr. McKnight at half-past seven.”

“We’ll probably get the same hours, mostly,” mused Kemble. “Fellow sufferers, we twain!”

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"Gee, if you don't want to study or anything, what did you come here for?" demanded Clif impatiently.

"Thunder! You don't suppose I came because I wanted to, do you?" asked Kemble incredulously. "I wanted to stay where I was, at Morristown. I was dead sure of the First Team this fall, too, hang it!"

"Where's Morristown, and what First Team do you mean?"

"New Jersey, of course. High School Team. I'd made the backfield certain if I'd been there. I nearly did it last year."

"Well, you can play football here, can't you?"

"Yes, and you can jump out the third-story window, but that doesn't mean you're going to fly! A swell chance I'd have to make the team here, Bingham! Oh, well!"

"I guess it's just a question of playing well enough. I'm going to try, anyhow."

"That so? Played much? What school?"

"I haven't played much, no," answered Clif, "but I mean to. I played on our Second Team last fall, but just as a sub. I was too light. I've put on eight or ten pounds since then, though."

"Back?"

"End."

"Half back's mine. Still, I'd play—play center if they'd let me! Best you and I'll make, though, is a class team or a hall team, or whatever they have here. Well, if the old high school gets licked this year it'll be Wyatt's fault."

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Clif laughed, and then, remembering that here was an enemy, he froze up quickly. “I guess it would worry him to know that,” he remarked with immense sarcasm. “Look here, Kemble, how about to-morrow?”

“To-morrow?” Kemble looked blank.

“Yes, to-morrow,” answered Clif sternly. “You needn’t pretend you’ve forgotten.”

“Oh, that! I really had forgotten, though; give you my word, Bingham. Why, any time you say. That is, if you really want to go on with it.”

“I certainly do,” answered Clif emphatically. “Unless,” he added after an instant, “you care to apologize.” He hoped, when he had said it, that his tone hadn’t sounded as eager to Kemble as it had to him!

“Apologize? Sure! Why not?” replied the other readily. “That’s much the best way, eh? You know, I’m about a dozen pounds heavier than you, old scout, and a couple of inches taller, too, and I guess—here, put your arm out.” Clif obeyed and Kemble tucked his fingers under the other’s armpit. “Just as I thought. I can outreach you by two inches.”

“That makes no difference,” declared Clif warmly. “You said you’d fight me—”

“Yes, I know,” broke in Kemble soothingly, “but I’ve apologized, haven’t I?”

“No, you haven’t. You merely said you were willing to.

“Oh, gosh, why the formality? All right, though. I apologize, Bingham, for—I say, what the dickens *do* I apologize for?”

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His perplexity was so genuine that Clif's severity relaxed in spite of himself. It was, he decided, no use trying to stay angry with this chap, and having reached that decision he felt much relieved, and laughed frankly at the puzzled Kemble. Whereupon Kemble's brow cleared and he grinned back.

"You're a perfect ass," declared Clif indulgently.

"No one is perfect," Kemble demurred modestly, "although some of us do come pretty close."

"Just the same, you were a good deal of a rotter to sit there and—and make fun—"

"Yes, I was, Bingham, and I'm sorry. I apologize, honestly. It isn't much of an excuse, I know, but—but I wasn't feeling very chipper myself."

Clif nodded. Kemble, of course, was referring to that session with Mr. Wyatt. Then:

"Maybe," added Kemble more constrainedly, "I'll tell you about it some time."

"Oh!" said Clif, for want of anything better. Kemble was staring frowningly at the nearby checker board. Observing him, Clif sensed a matter more serious than the recent English quiz. A silence that might have become slightly awkward in another moment was dispelled by the golden tones of the clock across the corridor. They reached Clif even above the noise of the room, and he sprang to his feet. "Gee! Seven-thirty! I've got to beat it, Kemble. Listen; I—"

"Go ahead. I'm with you."

In the corridor, where half a dozen boys were awaiting their turns at the telephone booths outside the Office,

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Kemble said, “Look for me in Assembly Hall at eight, eh? I’ll stick around the door.”

“Right-o!” agreed Clif, making for the stairs. “Wear a red carnation, will you?”

Kemble grinned and waved.

Although Clif reached his appointment several minutes late he had to wait several more minutes while Mr. McKnight disposed of a previous visitor, and he used the time in making an interested and approving examination of his surroundings. There were four faculty suites in each of the two dormitory buildings, and Mr. McKnight occupied Number 19, W., just around the corner from Clif’s room. Number 19, however, didn’t resemble Number 17 much. The study was a big, nearly square room with windows on two sides. Back of it, visible between parted draperies of dark blue, was the bedroom, and from that opened a bathroom of white tiling and gleaming nickel. But it was the study that enthralled Clif. Everything about it was so homelike and jolly. There was a small grand piano by the nearer window with a gorgeous silk prayer rug laid across it. Before the fireplace ran a huge couch that simply begged to be lolled in, and there was a shaded light behind one corner, in exactly the right place for reading. Rugs covered the floor, pictures—good ones, too, Clif was certain—peered down from the pleasant dimness of paneled walls, bookcases flanked the chimney. Here and there a deep chair; its leather cushion a mite shabby from honorable service, held forth inviting arms. Beside one, on a low stand, lay

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a blackened pipe, a magazine, opened face-down, and a heavy brass paper knife. For the first time Clif discerned advantages in the profession of pedagogy. If a fellow could live in a room like this, why, gee, teaching wouldn't be so bad!

Mr. McKnight sat at the farther side of a desk table, the light from a green-shaded lamp cutting him off at the top button of his waistcoat and leaving his face in mellow shadow. But when Clif had taken the chair across the polished expanse of mahogany surface the instructor's countenance was plainly visible. Mr. McKnight was the youngest member of the faculty, being but twenty-eight. Although his first name was Godfrey, he was popularly known as "Lovey." The reason was obscure. Some said that he had brought the nickname with him from college, others that it had been conferred upon him after he had arrived at Wyndham, but none could say why. Clif didn't consider that the name suited. In the first place, "Lovey" was rather a large man, dark haired, keen eyed and deep voiced; and, after that, there was nothing at all effeminate in his manner nor affectionate in the tone in which he had bade Clif exchange the chair by the door for that at the table.

"Your name's Clifton Bingham," said Mr. McKnight briskly. "You're in the Third Class."

Clif assented, watching the instructor take a gray oblong of cardboard from a drawer and begin to write on it. The writing was small and extremely neat and legible.

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“You have five prescribed courses in this term, of a total of eighteen hours, Bingham, as I presume you know. I include Hygiene, two hours, and I mention it because formerly one didn’t get it until Second Class year.” His pen moved rapidly and certainly. “There are two other courses open to you, either of which you may elect if you care to. They’re both ‘snap’ courses, you know, Bingham, and won’t strain you any. But if I were you I’d leave them alone this year; at least until the next term. I find that you chaps have plenty of work if you do it right. All right. Now about athletics.” Mr. McKnight laid his pen down, pushed the gray card aside and folded his hands. “Anything in that line appeal to you?”

“I’m going out for football, sir,” said Clif.

“Good. You understand that regular participation in some recognized sport is demanded, and that in any case you are required to attend gymnasium classes unless excused by the Physical Instructor, Mr. Babcock. If you are taken permanently on to one of the football squads you won’t have to bother with gym stuff for a while. See Mr. Babcock to-morrow, by the way. You’ll find him in his office in the gymnasium from nine to twelve. Or you can get him at his study in East Hall, probably. Better look this over and then put it somewhere where you can refer to it until you’ve got your hours memorized.”

He indicated the schedule and Clif picked it up and, after a somewhat vague examination, placed it in a pocket. Mr. McKnight asked about his roommate,

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about his football experience and about himself, and Clif gradually sank back against the chair and felt more at ease. Mr. McKnight leaned back, too, and listened and watched. Clif told about Providence and high school and his father and, before he realized it, how he had decided on Wyndham School. Mr. McKnight chuckled then, but it was a genial, understanding sort of chuckle, and Clif smiled in response, and after that the instructor didn't seem so awe-inspiring.

"That," said Mr. McKnight, "reminds me of the story of the boy whose father and mother wanted him to go to college but who wasn't keen on it himself. His father wanted Jack to go to Princeton and his mother wanted him to go to Harvard. (You can swap the names around to suit yourself, Bingham. I'm a Princeton man, and I'm telling it the Princeton way.) Jack didn't care where he went, you understand, and so, after his parents had argued the matter for weeks, he said, 'Tell you what, Dad. I'll toss a coin. If it comes down heads, you win and I go to Princeton. If it comes down tails, Ma wins and I go to Harvard.' So they agreed and Jack tossed up a quarter and when it fell and stopped rolling, there it was leaning up against the leg of a chair, straight on edge! Jack took a look at it and kicked it down the register. 'It's a "dud." I've got to go to Yale!'"

Clif laughed, but not so heartily as he might have if he had not at that period been vacillating between Yale and Brown as a scene for future scholastic and athletic triumphs!

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A few minutes later Mr. McKnight said, “I’d like to remind you, Bingham, that an adviser is one who supplies advice. Most fellows think his business is only to get them out of trouble. Well, I’m always glad to do all I can in that way, but you chaps ought to remember that prevention is better than cure and that if you come here for advice you’re not likely to come back later for help. Just bear that in mind, won’t you? And bear in mind that I’ve been through just what you and all the rest of you are going through—and not so long ago, either—and know pretty well what your problems and temptations are. So don’t think I’m no use to you except to advise you about your studies. Studies, school work, are a small part of your life here. The real problems and the biggest worries are likely to concern your relationship with your fellows, your attitude toward the school, your social and athletic interests. Very often the smallest problems are the hardest to solve, Bingham. Well, when you run up against something that you can’t settle to your own satisfaction come and see me and we’ll talk it over. Maybe we’ll find the answer that way, maybe we won’t; but it always helps to talk it over. Sort of blows the fog away. You’ll find me here in the evenings, generally, and always between five and six. And that reminds me: Friday evenings, after study hour, we get together here and have a sort of quiet shindig; talk a good deal, have a little music, maybe, and get acquainted. Not much in the way of excitement, you know, but usually a pleasant time is had by all. Drop in as often as you

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can, Bingham, and bring a friend with you." Mr. McKnight glanced at his watch. "You've just time to make assembly hall before the fun starts. Good night. Drop in often, Bingham. You don't have to wait for a Friday evening, you know."

Traversing the dimly lighted corridor of Middle Hall, past the gloomy caverns of the darkened class rooms, Clif was sensible of a new cheerfulness. The echoes aroused by the brisk tramp of his feet on the old, worn floor sounded almost friendly to him.

CHAPTER IV

A BOY IN A WHEEL CHAIR

TO reach the assembly hall, which occupied the entire first floor rear section of East Hall, just as the dining hall occupied the same location on the other side, Clif had to go the length of Middle Hall, pass into the wider corridor of the newer building beyond, turn left and follow the main corridor to the staircase. East Hall, save for a dozen rooms on the third floor, was devoted principally to the use of the Junior School, composed of boys between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Mr. Clendenin, known as "Wim" because of his invariable custom of signing himself "Wm. Clendenin," was at the head. The Juniors had their own parlor, recreation room, library, reading room, game room and office on the ground floor. They ate, however, in the dining hall in West and shared the class rooms in Middle with the older students. Middle, once containing all there was of the school, had long since been remodeled into class rooms only.

Doctor Wyndham, the Principal, occupied a suite of three rooms and bath on the second floor of East Hall. Other suites, smaller, similar to Mr. McKnight's, were

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situate in each of the newer buildings, and accommodated fourteen faculty members.

Clif descended the stairway to the first floor corridor. At the far end the vicinity of the assembly hall entrance was crowded with boys who, waiting outside until the last moment, had now begun to crowd through the wide doorway. Clif concluded that he was the last one to arrive, but he wasn't, since, as he passed the open door of a room beyond Mr. Clendenin's office, he was obliged to step quickly aside to avoid collision with a wheel chair which, emerging noiselessly on rubber tires, had given him no warning. The chair was occupied by a boy a year or so Clif's senior. A dark plaid rug covered the lower part of his body. On a shelf stretched between the chair arms lay a book and a fountain pen. The occupant of the chair propelled it by the wheels, turning it deftly to avoid Clif and directing it along the corridor toward assembly hall. He smiled an apology as he did so. Noting that he was obliged to lean forward slightly to grasp the wheels, or, rather, a rim that projected from them for the purpose of propulsion, Clif said impulsively:

"Let me be chauffeur, won't you?"

The boy in the chair looked back and smiled again. "Why, thanks. I'm just going to the assembly hall, and it really isn't hard, but if you don't mind giving me a shove—"

"Glad to," said Clif heartily.

By the time they had reached the door the throng had thinned to a few embarrassed, giggling juniors,

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and, at the other's request, Clif wheeled the chair just inside the portal. Doctor Wyndham was already on the platform and the fellows were clapping loudly. The boy in the chair smiled his thanks and Clif tiptoed across to Tom, who had saved a seat for him in the rear row.

"Who's that fellow?" asked Tom in whispers.

"I don't know. I met him in the corridor." Then, as the applause ceased, Clif gave his attention to the speaker. Doctor Wyndham was a tall, erect man of sixty who looked rather more like a successful business executive than a school principal. His hair, of which he had managed to retain a goodly amount, was scarcely more than grizzled, and his healthily tanned skin spoke of fine physical condition. He was extremely good looking and very distinguished appearing, and the School was proud of him. That he was the business man as well as the pedagogue was proved by the institution of which he was the head and owner. In the brief space of twenty-four years he had built it up from nothing to one of the finest and best-known preparatory schools of the east. The Doctor had been a widower for many years and was without children. It was believed that, at his death, the school would go to Mr. Wyatt, his nephew.

He had a wonderfully clear and resonant voice and enunciated each word so distinctly that, listening, one was likely to lose the matter of his discourse in the enjoyment of his delivery. Something of that sort occurred to Clif, for when the frequent patter of ap-

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plause broke in on the pleasant flow he usually discovered that he didn't know what the speaker had just said. Then, too, the boy in the wheel chair interested Clif. He stole frequent glances across and wondered a good deal about him. He looked remarkably healthy, with a good deal of color in his cheeks and plenty of sparkle in his dark eyes. His hair was dark, too, almost black, it seemed, and was brushed straight back from a high forehead which, aided by a straight nose and a slightly pointed chin, made Clif think of the Flaxman profiles of ancient Greek heroes. A handsome fellow, Clif decided, and attractive. He had frequently heard the word magnetic used in reference to persons, but this was the first time it had ever occurred to him as appropriate. He concluded that he would rather like to know the boy in the chair

The Principal's talk was a good deal like a dozen or more other talks he had made on similar occasions. There was a welcome to the new students, a greeting to the old ones, much sensible advice on many subjects, a reference to athletics—and especially football, a touch of humor here and there and, at the last, an appeal to his hearers for a conscientious performance of their duties to themselves, their parents and the School. Outside, Clif hazarded the opinion that it had been a mighty fine talk, hoping that Tom wouldn't call on him to prove it by quotations. Tom said: "Yes, but I didn't get much of it. Let's go over to the big city and buy some peanuts or something, Bingham. I'm starved!"

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“Will they let us?”

“Why not? There’s no study hour to-night. Anyway, we won’t be gone more than ten minutes.”

There was a light behind the windows of Number 17 West as they passed the courtyard, and Clif pictured Walter Harrison Treat up there rearranging his shoes for the fourth time and chuckled. Kemble asked what the joke was and Clif explained. Kemble declared that Treat must be a pill, adding: “I wish you and I had got together, Bingham. I’m with a Second Class fellow named Desmond, Billy Desmond. Not a bad sort, but a bit snifty because he’s been around here a couple of years.”

“I guess Treat feels sort of superior for the same reason,” mused Clif.

“I don’t want to be harsh with Desmond, because he’s a First Team man; plays tackle, I think; and he might be useful. I say, you’re going out for practice to-morrow, aren’t you?”

“Yes. I haven’t heard anything about it, but - suppose they want candidates.”

“Of course they do. Did you bring togs?”

“Some old ones. I’ll get others if—it’s worth while.”

“Oh, you’ll get to play somewhere. Desmond says there’s a lot of rivalry amongst the class teams. And then there’s the scrub, too.”

“I’ll be lucky to make that, I guess. The fellows here look awfully big and husky, Kemble.”

“Yes, there’s a guy at my table who must be nine-

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teen if he's a day, and if he doesn't top six feet I'll eat my hat! Say, I wonder if we can't fix it to get together in dining hall. Suppose they'll let us? I'll find out to-morrow. There's a fruit store over there, and I think I smell peanuts!"

Going back, Kemble explained, while he cracked peanuts steadily, that he hadn't been able to do very well at supper. "Mental exhaustion, you know. I was all in when Wyatt let me go. I ought to hate that guy, but I don't seem to. He surely handed me some hot ones, but I guess I deserved them. What's the good of knowing so blamed much about the queers who wrote books a couple of hundred years ago? Heck, it's all I can do to half keep track of the guys who are doing it now! Wyatt asked me to tell him what I knew about Scott, and I said he was a mighty clever short-stop, but I didn't know his batting average. But, gosh, he wasn't talking baseball, he was talking about the fellow who wrote 'Ivanhoe'!"

"I saw you from my window when you were making some of those brilliant sallies," laughed Clif, "and you certainly did look unhappy, Kemble!"

"I was! Say, drop the 'Kemble,' will you? I'm generally called Tom."

"I like Tom better. My name's Clif, short for Clifton."

"I know. I heard your father call you that. That's a real classy name."

Clif reflected that he hadn't thought of his father for a long while, and felt sort of guilty.

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“Not much style to Thomas,” the other was continuing. “My middle name’s Ackerman. That was my mother’s before she married. When I was a kid I used to write my name T. Ackerman Kemble, but the fellows got on to it and called me Tackerman, and then Tak. Mother used to call me Tommy, but I had to lick a chap in school for doing it. It was all right from her, but I couldn’t stand for it generally.”

“Is your mother—I mean—”

“Yes, she died about six years ago. A man named Winslow is my guardian. Mother didn’t have any near relatives and this guy was her lawyer and so she stung me with him. He’s sort of a pill. I say, pipe the faculty chap on the steps!”

Against the light of West Hall entrance a tall figure was darkly silhouetted as they came up the drive.

“Faculty chaps are bad luck for me,” confided Tom; “like black cats!” Clif laughed uneasily. Then they were at the steps and he said “Good evening, sir,” as pleasantly as he knew how.

“Good evening,” was the response. “Where have you boys been?”

“Just looking around, sir,” answered Tom promptly.

“What have you there?” The man indicated Tom’s right hand. Tom looked and replied affably: “A peanut, sir.”

“Hm. What’s your name?”

“Kemble, sir.”

“And yours?”

“Bingham, sir.”

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“Well, Kemble and Bingham, it’s contrary to rules to go off the grounds after six o’clock. You didn’t, I presume, pick that peanut off any of the trees here.”

“Oh, no, sir,” answered Tom. “I rather think they grow on vines.”

“Your knowledge of agriculture is impressive.” Tom thought the instructor’s features relaxed a trifle, but since they were in shadow he couldn’t be certain. “You boys had better report to Mr. Frost in the morning,” he went on. “Tell him Mr. Waltman sent you; and why.”

“Yes, sir,” said Tom politely. Then, as Mr. Waltman ascended the steps and disappeared inside the Hall, he added sadly: “Heck! This is a fine start, isn’t it? Something tells me, Clif, that I’m not going to like this place!”

Clif went up to Number 34 with Tom and met the “snifty” roommate and liked him a lot. Billy Desmond was a large, good-hearted and generally smiling fellow of seventeen. Perhaps he was rather inclined just at first to use a patronizing tone with Tom and Clif, but he got over it before many days had passed and was voted a good scout by both of them. To-night he joked them a lot about their mishap and drew lugubrious pictures of the Assistant to the Principal, Mr. Frost, and described a variety of dire results any one of which might befall them. Even though he discounted Billy’s predictions Tom was characteristically pessimistic and frequently reiterated his conviction that he wasn’t going to be happy at Wyndham.

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Although on the third floor and on the opposite side of the building from Clif's room, Number 34 was a replica of it. The only noticeable difference was in the amount of floor space. Number 34 seemed smaller. But Clif soon saw that this was due to a leather couch which, at present occupied by Billy, thrust out from the end of the study table like a sore thumb. It had a history, that couch. Billy had bought it last term from a departing owner who, in turn, had purchased it three years before from some one else. Beyond that point it could not be traced, but it looked every day of twenty years! Its brown leather covering was missing in many places and torn in others, and wherever this was the case the stuffing of tow protruded pathetically. It had been tufted at one time, but the buttons had long since disappeared. While it probably retained the same number of springs with which it had started, most of them had ceased functioning. A few had not, however, and it was those few which made it extremely difficult for the stranger to occupy the couch with any degree of comfort. They stuck up at unexpected places and, in collusion with the slippery surface of the well-worn leather, had deposited many an unwary visitor on the floor. But Billy was very fond of that relic, very proud of it, and was still convinced that when he had exchanged three dollars and twenty-five cents for it he had consummated a master stroke of finance. With the aid of two faded, lumpy pillows—thrown in with the couch for good measure—he occupied a sort of trough down the center of the antiquity and, with the

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desk light conveniently near, could read or study at ease. Just now, of course, he was doing neither.

“You fellows want to see ‘Cocky’ in the morning and take your physical exams. If you don’t you can’t turn out for practice. You play football, too, I suppose, Bingham?” Billy gave Clif an appraising look that held approval. Clif was tall for his sixteen years and, although lacking weight, didn’t look stringy. Of course, Billy reflected, he wasn’t First Team material yet, but he looked promising. He seemed alert and might be fast. Billy liked his clean-cut features, and the way his face lighted when he smiled. Rather the sort of fellow, he imagined, who would get along fast and make a name for himself at Wyndham.

“You won’t get much more than a lot of hard work this year,” Billy continued when Clif had replied affirmatively. He was addressing them both, however. “But you’ll be mighty glad next year that you had it. That is, you will if you take your medicine and don’t quit because you can’t be bloomin’ heroes the first thing! That’s going to be your trouble, likely, Tom. You’ll go off half-cocked some day and resign because the coach doesn’t pat you on the back.”

“How do you get that way?” asked Tom indignantly. “Don’t you suppose they play football anywhere but here? I’ve played since I was twelve, and I’ve never quit yet, and I’ve had some raw deals, too!”

Billy laughed. “You’re going to be a lot of fun for me this year, Tom,” he said. “You’ve got quite a lot of new stuff, son.”

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“Huh!” Tom regarded his roommate doubtfully. Then he grinned. “It’s going to be fifty-fifty, I guess. I’m not the only funny one in this room.”

“Good lad,” approved Billy.

They talked football for a while and Billy told about last year and how Wolcott had turned the tables in the last quarter of the big game and turned a Wyndham victory into a devastating defeat. “We had them all the way until the tag end of that period. We’d scored in the first and second, and booted a goal each time. It was all over but the shouting, you might have thought, for 14 to 3—they’d snitched a field-goal in the third—was good enough for any one, and all we had to do was hold them for the rest of the game. Then they put this chap Grosfawk in at end. No one had ever heard of him before around here. Our scouts didn’t even remember his name. They had the ball down on their thirty, and there was less than five minutes of the game left. Their inside half, Cummins, faked a kick and tossed to this Grosfawk chap, who had managed to sneak pretty well across the field. It wasn’t an awfully long throw, and he made it slow and sure. Grosfawk was just about even with the scrimmage line when he caught and when we’d nailed him he was three yards from our goal-line. He’d run about sixty-five yards, and there wasn’t a fellow on our team who could lay claim to having touched him! Dodge? That boy invented it! And he can run like a jack rabbit. He’s a wonder, and why Wolcott didn’t find it out before that game is more than I know!”

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“Did they make the touchdown?” asked Tom.

“Yes, it took them four downs, but they finally got the ball over, and that put the score 14 to 10. We still thought we had the game, and we played for time and stalled all they’d let us. But, shucks, that Grosfawk didn’t know he was licked. Of course we laid for him and he got used sort of hard, but with only a couple of minutes left we didn’t pay so much attention to him as we should have. So what does he do but pull the same stunt? This time he only had about fifty yards to go, and we made him earn them by chasing him back and forth across the field two or three times. I nearly had him once myself. So did most of the others. He got tired of reversing the field after a while. Maybe he was afraid the whistle might go off by accident before he got the touchdown. Anyway, he streaked it through our whole bunch just when it seemed we had him, with two or three of his team interfering by then, and dodged our quarter and went over right between the posts. Well, that spilled the beans good and plenty. Why, we had that old game in our pocket five minutes before! We—we’d even spent it! I guess we were just about the sorriest, saddest, most disgusted bunch you ever saw that evening!”

Tom chuckled. “Good thing for you fellows Bingham and I came along, I guess. You need some one to look after you and see that those naughty Wolcott boys don’t steal your games. Mighty lucky, I’d say, they didn’t take the uniforms off you fellows when you weren’t looking!”

A BOY IN A WHEEL CHAIR

“You’re a cheeky cuss,” said Billy, but he laughed. “Well, that’s the way the battle was fit, fellows. This year ‘G.G.’ will probably detail a couple of fellows to do nothing but watch Mr. Grosfawk. If he ever gets loose, good-by, game!”

“Oh, piffle,” said Tom. “The guy’s good, I dare say, but you fellows let him hypnotize you. It takes more than one player, no matter how good he is, to win a game. All you’ve got to do this year is break up their passing game. You must have had a slow bunch, I guess.”

“Tom,” said Billy, shaking his head, “you’re a great little know-it-all. You come around and tell me all that again in a couple of months and maybe I’ll believe it. There’s the gong, Bingham. Better beat it. Good night. See you again soon, I hope.”

CHAPTER V

OUT FOR THE TEAM

DESPITE Tom's forebodings the interview with Mr. Frost went off quite pleasantly the next morning. The Principal's assistant was rather bald and wore thick-lensed spectacles, but he was quite a young man and did not strive to appear otherwise. He seemed more amused than pained by the explanation of the visit.

"Tough luck, boys, to buck the rules the first night of the term!" he commented. "Of course you knew you shouldn't do it?"

Clif assured him he hadn't known it, and Mr. Frost—"Homer" the school called him, that being his given name—turned to a page in a blue-covered booklet, placed a finger half-way down it and invited Clif to read. It was there, as plain as daylight, and Clif, who had perused that volume thoroughly, as he thought, couldn't understand how he had missed it. As for Tom, the latter explained cheerfully that he had only looked at the pictures! Mr. Frost gravely presented each of them with a copy of the booklet, advising them to become better acquainted with the school regulations, and dismissed them smilingly.

Returning to West Hall, Clif made fun of his com-

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panion for having been so pessimistic last evening. Tom grinned. "There's something wrong with that fellow," he answered. "He won't be here long. You mark my words, Clif. He's too easy!"

That first day was devoted principally to preparing for future labor. He and Tom visited several classrooms and listened to instructions and made notes. They bought books and stationery. They also visited Mr. Babcock, the Physical Director, in the gymnasium, which stood a few rods back of East Hall, and underwent tests. Since there were at least a dozen other fellows waiting, "Cocky" put them through expeditiously, handed each a small card bearing his name and a lot of figures and dismissed them. Then came dinner, followed by another visit to Middle where, in Room H, they listened while Mr. Waltman explained what a beautiful thing was the Science of Mathematics and how much pleasure could be derived from the study of it, if they would but realize it. "The Turk" also dwelt at some length on the results that might accrue to them if they didn't realize it! Tom, who had taken a dislike to the instructor since last evening, made sarcastic comments under his breath and caricatured "The Turk" on the back of a blue book. Finally, having obediently taken note of to-morrow's lesson, they were released. Going out, Clif glimpsed the wheel chair and its occupant rolling along the corridor toward East Hall. He had encountered them several times before during the day. Evidently, he concluded, the fellow was Third Class, too. He spoke to Tom about it.

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“I don’t know what class he is,” said Tom, “but his name’s Deane. I heard a chap call him that this morning. Get your togs and wait for me down front. I won’t be more than a minute.”

They obtained adjoining lockers in the gymnasium and changed into football attire. Then, since they were early for practice, they snoopied around the building, upstairs and down. The gymnasium was new and well appointed. The floor was large enough for two basketball games to be played at once, there was a good running track above, and, occupying the second story of the wing, a rowing room and two other apartments variously used for fencing, boxing, wrestling and possibly other sports. Underneath was a large baseball cage and a dressing room for visiting teams. The basement, which was half above ground and well lighted, held the lockers, a swimming pool, shower baths and the trainer’s quarters. On the main floor, near the front entrance, Mr. Babcock had his office.

There were numerous trophies to be viewed and a wealth of pictures hung about the halls and rooms, most of the latter group photographs of teams and crews of former years. Here and there, however, was to be seen a picture of a football game or a view of a crew race. “‘1919—Wyndham 16—Wolcott 0,’” read Tom. “Huh! ‘1917—Wyndham by Seven Lengths.’ Say, it’s a funny thing you can’t find any photographs where we were licked!”

“Well,” laughed Clif, “here’s a football game we only tied. ‘Wyndham 7—Wolcott 7,’ it says.”

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“That must have got hung up by mistake! But it’s a pretty nifty gym, just the same. Let’s go and see what the field’s like.”

Wyndham School had almost outgrown its athletic field, but the fact wasn’t apparent to Clif and Tom as they left the gymnasium and started across the grass toward the football gridiron. The farther line of the school property was indicated by a soldierly array of tall poplars. Against them, almost directly across from the gymnasium, was a commodious concrete stand. The quarter-mile track was in front, inclosing the First Team gridiron. Another pair of goals, farther away, provided a field for the second squad, while what was known as the class field lay, somewhat cramped, behind the school halls. There were two diamonds, although in the fall the Second Team gridiron infringed on the more distant one. A brook flowed across one corner of the property and had been dammed to make a sizable pond well south of the running track. In winter the pond supplied skating facilities and sufficient surface for two rinks, but at other seasons its usefulness was not so evident. When the soccer team played on the small expanse of turf awarded to them the small punt now moored to a stake was occupied by some Junior School volunteer whose duty was to recover errant balls from the placid surface of the pond.

There was only a handful of candidates present when Clif and Tom reached the shade of the covered grandstand and the latter clumped their way to a couple of seats and awaited the beginning of practice. It was

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a warm afternoon, with but little air stirring, and, although Freeburg was set well amongst the lesser slopes of the Berkshires, that air was decidedly humid. Tom mopped his forehead with the sleeve of a brown jersey and then tried to fan himself with an ancient headguard. "Hope the coach doesn't give us much to do," he muttered. "It's too hot for football."

"You might suggest it to him," answered Clif. "I guess that's he now; the man in the white shirt."

Tom looked and said he guessed so, too, but he didn't leave his seat to offer the coach any advice. A more self-assured fellow than Tom would have hesitated to approach "G.G." on any matter not vitally important. "G.G.'s" name was George G. Otis. Some said the second "G" stood for "Grumpy," but it really didn't. It stood for Gray. Mr. Otis wasn't very large—Captain Dave Lothrop, beside him, was four inches taller and quite as wide of shoulders; and even the long trousers of faded gray flannel didn't wholly conceal the fact that he was slightly bowlegged. But there was plenty of body there, and the fact that his legs weren't quite straight hadn't kept him from winning a fair share of fame as a plunging half not many years back. He hadn't greatly distinguished himself while at Wyndham, but his subsequent career had been linked with two football teams by which all later teams at his college were judged. He had a rather bullet-shaped head, with thin hair of a faded brown, sharp eyes of a brown that wasn't the least bit faded, a short nose a bit too flat for beauty, a mouth that closed tight and straight and an

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aggressive chin. On the whole he wasn't an Apollo. But he knew a lot of football and could teach it to boys; and teaching football to boys is a different and much harder task than teaching it to men.

"G.G." didn't seek popularity, and so he won it. He was a hard taskmaster, could act the tyrant on occasion and had a sharp, harsh tongue. He insisted on absolute obedience and had been known to use drastic methods to enforce discipline. He was sometimes intensely disliked by those who didn't share his views on the necessity for obedience. But he was fair, could laugh as heartily as any one, off the field, and never made the mistake, a too common one, of expecting boys of preparatory school age to think or perform like collegians. Best of all, perhaps, from the point of view of the School, was the fact that during his three years as coach at Wyndham his charges had won twice from Wolcott. That was almost enough to account for popularity, but I think that there was another reason for it. Boys have a respect for despotism and a liking for being firmly ruled just so long as they are certain that the despotism is just and the ruler is worthy. And as a despot George G. Otis would have satisfied the most demanding!

Tom, after looking the coach over exhaustively from the distance of some ten yards, said "Huh!" in a very doubtful tone. After a moment he said "Huh!" again, and this time it seemed to express conviction. It did, for he followed it with: "Something tells me, Clif, I'm not going to like that guy! He—he's got a bad eye!"

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The gathering in front of the stand increased rapidly, while the stand itself began to fill along its front seats with spectators. Mr. Hilliard, Instructor in Modern Languages, who was also assistant coach, joined the throng by the bench. The trainer, Dan Farrell, a short, chunky man with a round, good-natured countenance and sharp blue eyes, directed the unloading of the two-wheeled pushcart of its contents; two canvas bags of ancient and scarred footballs, a carboy of water, two cartons of paper cups, two buckets, a large sponge, several headguards, a skein of shoe lacings, a battered black bag and some other objects. The black bag held Dan's first-aid appliances. The manager, Jack Macon, carried a board with a clip at one end that held down several large sheets of paper. He talked with Mr. Otis while the two assistant managers, one from the Second and one from the Third Class, wandered about vaguely as though anxious to be helpful but not knowing how. Clif saw the coach pull a watch from his trousers pocket and glance at it, and nudged his companion.

"Let's get down," he said.

So they clumped back to the field, Clif, at least, feeling extremely unimportant amidst the gathering of older, larger and self-confident youths. Here and there, however, was a boy whose appearance or bearing proclaimed the neophyte, and Clif regained a trifle of assurance. Tom, although still plainly disapproving of Mr. Otis, showed no indication of being troubled by an inferiority complex. He sauntered to the thick of the throng, and Clif went with him, showing, though

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a disposition to keep in the lee of his companion's slightly larger bulk. The coach clapped his hands and silence fell, while some sixty canvas-clad youths closed about him

"Fellows, we're starting to-day to lick Wolcott," announced "G.G." "We've got eight weeks to do it in. We're going to keep our objective in mind every minute of those eight weeks. There's going to be a lot of hard work, and any of you who are afraid of work had better keep away from me. You won't like me, and I'm certain I shan't like you, and we'd better not try to mix. I'm dead set on having my own way, and I'm a crank when I don't get it. Any one who doesn't like the prospect should resign right now. Those of you who sign up will be expected to stick for the duration. All right. Shed your headguards, fellows. You won't need them to-day. Last season First and Second Team players and substitutes down the field. The rest of you here. Mr. Hilliard, will you take this bunch, please? Balls, Dan!"

Clif and Tom found themselves in the squad under Mr. Hilliard and put in nearly an hour passing the ball and receiving it. There were frequent rests, for the day was hot and most of the squad were soft with easy living, but the work was hard enough to cause more than one erstwhile ambitious youth to wonder whether it wouldn't be wiser to seek glory in some other less strenuous pursuit. Even Clif, who had sought to keep himself conditioned during the summer, was soon perspiring freely and was both surprised and a trifle dis-

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mayed to find himself puffing. It was evident to him that his system of summer training had not been a success. Looking back, he realized that he had spent more time on the hotel porch or lolling on the sand than he had meant to!

Mr. Hilliard was called "Pinky" because his hair was coppery-brown. It didn't approach red, but since no other faculty member presented a better claim to the nickname it was awarded to Mr. Hilliard. He was about thirty years old, Clif concluded. He was fairly tall and thin, with a peculiar quick manner of moving his head; sort of jerky, as Clif phrased it to himself; like a hen's!

Practice ended with a single lap around the inner border of the running track. It nearly finished Clif, and he ended the circuit at a slow walk. Tom poked fun at him as they returned to the gymnasium, and Clif was much too short of breath to make any defense. So ended the first day.

The second wasn't much different. There was more long passing and they practiced starts, but getting acquainted with the ball was the principal desideratum, just as yesterday. Both Clif and Tom slightly resented being treated as members of the kindergarten class, although acknowledging that it probably wouldn't do them any harm. Mr. Otis, who had the first squad in charge, found time to look over the others occasionally, and at such times Mr. Hilliard's pupils sought pathetically hard to attract the coach's favorable notice. Or most of them did. Tom, for some reason not quite

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plain to Clif, resented the infrequent visits of "G.G." Once, seeing the head coach's approach, Tom, at the receiving end of a ten-yard pass, opened his arms wide as the ball came to him and made a most ridiculously amateurish effort at catching. The ball went through, bounded from his body and trickled across the turf. Tom affected deep chagrin and followed it. He picked it up a few yards from Mr. Otis and then looked at him invitingly. The coach returned the look for a moment. Then he said: "Your left shoe lace is trailing. Fix it."

Tom sped the ball across vindictively. In a pause he said to Clif: "Did you hear him? Didn't I tell you I wasn't going to like that guy?"

Clif laughed and then sobered. "What did you want to do that for, anyway? Just to show off?"

"Why, heck," answered the other indignantly, "a fellow can't catch it every time!"

"Run along and sell your papers!" jeered Clif. "You did that on purpose. You just wanted Mr. Otis to jump on you so you could have a grouch on him. Anyway, I see you've tied your lace!"

"Oh, go to the dickens," grumbled Tom.

To-day's practice lasted longer than yesterday's and, since it involved a good deal of running around, it left the candidates rather more wrung out than on the previous afternoon. Clif confided to Tom that if he was called on to jog the track he'd die before he was half-way around. Fortunately, then, only a handful of fellows, all from Mr. Otis's squad, were called on for that final martyrdom, and Clif was able to reach the

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gymnasium and to insinuate himself under the refreshing downpour of a shower bath without further suffering. But he was so fagged out and so lame by the time supper was over that he flatly refused Tom's challenge to chess—a game he knew very little of—and dragged his weary body up to Number 17 and flopped on his bed. Tom, not to be deprived of his chess, sought the recreation room, promising to meet the other for study hour.

Walter Treat looked mildly disapproving when Clif stretched his tired body out on the bed. Walter's athletic activities were confined to an infrequent game of tennis and an even more infrequent afternoon of golf, and it is probable that he didn't appreciate his roommate's condition. Interpreting the look correctly, though, Clif presented his excuse, wondering as he did so why he should consider it necessary to secure Walter's approval.

"I don't see why they make you fellows practice on such a warm day," observed Walter when Clif had added a groan to his explanation for good measure. "Still, I dare say there's so little time that they can't afford to waste any. Better take a hot bath before bed."

"Gee, that sounds good," assented Clif. After a minute he asked: "Say, Walter, do you know who the fellow in the invalid's chair is?"

"His name is Deane; either Laurence or Lorin, I think. His father is Sanford Deane."

"Sanford Deane? You don't mean *the* Sanford Deane, do you?"

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“Yes. I’m telling you what I heard. It may not be right.”

“Well, I wouldn’t be surprised if it was,” said Clif. “He sort of looks like—like somebody important. Was he here last year?”

“No, he’s new. As for his looking important, maybe he does, Clif, but I don’t know that the fact that his father is immensely wealthy gives him the right to!”

“Why, no, and I didn’t mean just that, I guess. Still, his father is pretty well known, pretty prominent, aside from being rich, isn’t he? You’re always reading about him in the papers.”

“Important in a financial way, certainly.” Walter almost, but not quite, shrugged. “Any one who gets hold of fifty or sixty million dollars can get his name in the papers every day if he wants to. Sometimes it gets there when he doesn’t want it to.”

Walter smiled cynically.

CHAPTER VI

WATTLES

CLIF was glad that the next day was Sunday. He could lie abed a half-hour later, which was something to rejoice over, and, save for church at eleven o'clock, no duties claimed him until study hour at eight. He awoke before the rising bell and had a full ten minutes in which to stretch his lame muscles and accustom himself to the thought of getting up. The muscles were not as sore as he had expected they would be, and by the time he was ready for breakfast he felt quite fit. As though having atoned overnight for his talkativeness, Walter spoke but twice during dressing, and then only when spoken to.

In the afternoon Clif and Tom went to walk. They set out to find the golf links since, although the students were not allowed to play the game on Sunday, there were certain club members whose views were less strict than Doctor Wyndham's, and Tom had a mind to select a promising twosome and follow it around, his idea of spending a Sunday afternoon pleasantly being to derive entertainment from others at as slight a cost of physical or mental exertion to himself as possible. But his plan went agley since a full half-hour's search failed to discover the links. Billy Desmond had said

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it was a good mile from the school, and so far he had proved truthful, but the rest of his information had been purposely misleading. Perhaps Billy's idea of spending a pleasant Sunday afternoon was to sit comfortably in Number 34, surrounded by pages of the morning paper, and mentally picture Tom and Clif seeking a golf course where there never had been one!

They located it finally, however. Having abandoned search for it, they climbed Baldhead Mountain, which deserved only the first half of its title and presented few difficulties, and from the bare granite ledge on the summit saw figures moving about over a green expanse some two miles distant. The figures were recognizable as men playing golf. Tom said "Huh!" disgustedly and resolutely turned his gaze away.

Well, there were more things than golf courses to be seen. On a clear day, such as this was, one could look into three states from the summit of Baldhead. Since, however, there was no way of telling where Connecticut merged into Massachusetts or where Massachusetts became New York one's satisfaction in the feat was somewhat dimmed. Tom declared that the different states should have signs on them.

It was warm up there on the sloping, weather-worn ledge, but the breeze prevented discomfort. Tom hugged his knees, sending a puzzled look toward the distant links. Finally he seemed to see a light, for he said "*By heck!*" in a most explosive fashion, following it, after a moment of grim silence, with: "But I'll get even with Billy!"

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Later Clif recalled Walter's revelations about the boy in the wheel chair, and he proceeded to spring the news on Tom. "Say, who do you suppose he is?" he asked, having introduced the subject.

"King Tut," said Tom, hurling a pebble into the distance.

"No, seriously. Well, he's Sanford Deane's son!"

"The man who owns all the money in the world? How come he's here?" Tom was disappointingly unimpressed, Clif considered.

"Why shouldn't he be here? What's the matter with this place?"

"Nothing, but there are lots of schools where it costs you a heap more. You'd think he would send the fellow to one of those."

"Well, I don't see that," Clif objected. "Anyway, being a cripple—"

"Did Treat tell you what the trouble with the chap is?"

"No, I didn't ask him."

"I heard some one say that he hasn't any legs, but I don't believe that. Yesterday that nurse or valet of his was carrying him upstairs in Middle, and I'm pretty sure I could see his legs under that rug thing. Of course they might be artificial."

"I don't believe it either," said Clif. "He was only about twenty feet from us in History class yesterday, and I just know he had plenty of legs!"

"How many?" chuckled Tom. "He isn't a centipede, is he?"

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"You know what I mean," Clif laughed. "I'd sort of like to know him, but he doesn't give you much encouragement. Being so blamed rich, maybe he doesn't want to have anything to do with us. Still, he doesn't *look* snobbish."

"I came near speaking to him yesterday," said Tom, "but the valet chap looked so sort of snippy I didn't. Glad of it now. Guess he'd have frozen me up."

"I don't believe so, Tom."

"Well, I'm sorry for him, but I don't want to know him. Fellows whose folks have a lot of money put on too many airs for me, old son. Get a move on. I've got to get back and tell Billy where he gets off!"

After a week at school Clif felt as if he had been there a long while. He had become accustomed to the routine, and a willing slave to the clanging gong. At first getting up promptly at seven, slipping inside assembly hall for prayers before the doors closed at seven-fifteen and reaching Table 12 for breakfast before eight had been irksome. And for a day or two he was forced to consult his schedule frequently in order to appear at the right recitation room at the proper time. Accustomed to studying alone, the first study hour in assembly hall had profited him but little. You had to go there at eight and sit until nine, surrounded by something like a hundred and ninety others, and prepare your next day's lessons. You could study as much as you pleased at other times, and in other places, but between eight and nine in the evening, every day save Saturday, you had to be present in assembly

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hall. One of the faculty sat on the platform and, lifting his eyes periodically from his own work, sent his gaze roving over the big room. Then, perhaps, you'd hear exchanges like these:

"Asleep, Jones, or thinking?"

There would be a sudden start on the part of Jones, an agitated clutching of book or paper, and "Thinking, sir!" Jones would answer.

"Hm. Try doing it without closing the eyes, Jones."

Or: "I'm sorry, Robinson, that I am too far from you to listen to that conversation with Brown. It must be quite interesting."

"I was just borrowing an eraser, sir."

"You have it now?"

The eraser would be exhibited as evidence.

"Very well. Hereafter try to provide yourself with such—er—items before coming here. If it takes you so long to negotiate the loan of an eraser, Robinson, I shudder to think what would happen if you found you had forgotten, say, your fountain pen. The hour would be all too short, I fear!"

The bright overhead lights, the fluttering of leaves, the scratching of pens, the shuffling of feet, the presence of so many others around him all combined to deprive Clif of whatever power of concentration he possessed. That first study hour was a total loss so far as he was concerned.

But he got used to it after a time or two, just as he got used to other features of life at Wyndham School,

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and his letters to his father were increasingly cheerful. For days at a time he never went off the school property, but that was principally because football practice occupied his afternoons. The mornings were pretty well taken up with recitations, and with preparing for them. In the afternoon the last recitation for Clif was sometimes at half-past two, sometimes at three. In the latter case he showed up for practice about ten minutes late. Practice generally ran until half-past five nowadays, and there was only enough time for a shower, and a few minutes of rest before supper time. Between supper and study hour there was an interim of perhaps an hour and a half, and after study hour came "prowl." "Prowl" was the hour between nine and ten when visiting between halls was permitted. At ten, unless you were a First Class fellow, you were required to be back in your own room; except you were the fortunate possessor of a permit from a "fac." At ten-thirty you put your light out.

Life was busy and interesting. Clif soon discovered that he was going to have to study rather harder than last year, but he encountered no real difficulty in any course. The same was true of Tom save that the latter was already bogged down, as he phrased it, in English. That was one study which Tom dreaded and disliked—and at which he toiled hardest. "That 'Alick' guy thinks I can't do the fool stuff," he declared once to Clif, "but he's got another think. I'll do it if it kills me!" "Alick" was, of course, Mr. Alexander Wyatt.

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Football claimed a good share of attention, and was the subject of much conversation between Clif and Tom, and, frequently, Billy Desmond. Billy was generous with advice, but although the boys followed the advice to the best of their abilities, it didn't, as Clif put it, seem to get them anything. They worked hard and conscientiously, just as did three score others, but without any noticeable improvement in their status. The candidates had been sorted into four squads by Wednesday, and Clif and Tom were in Squad D. Squad D was composed of some sixteen or eighteen youths of various ages, sizes and football experiences in charge of "Pinky" Hilliard. "Pinky" also looked after Squad C, or did so until Friday, when Mr. Babcock joined the coaching staff. On that afternoon Squad A, and many of Squad B, were dismissed early, since the first game was scheduled for the morrow, and Coach Otis gave his attention to the remaining candidates. It was the seventh day of practice, and, after a preliminary hour of passing and falling on the ball, of starting and tackling the dummy, line and backfield candidates were separated, and the former hustled to the north end of the field by the head coach and given a half hour's instruction in their duties.

Afterwards, punters and forwards were sent to one side of the field, and backs to the other, and the balls were soon arching across to be pulled down by the backfield candidates, and run back while tackles and ends came across to meet them. Hard tackling was barred, however, the man with the ball either being

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run off to one side or merely blocked with the body. Clif, encountering Tom several times in midfield, regretted the prohibition. It would have added greatly to his enjoyment of the occasion to have been allowed to topple the dodging, feinting Tom to earth. He did secure some satisfaction on one encounter, however, by knocking the ball from Tom's grasp and jeering as the latter vented outraged feelings and trotted off in pursuit. The air was full of flying balls, players raced this way and that and shouts of "Mine!" or "I've got it!" vied with the calls of the coaches. Lacking a scrimmage to watch, the audience in the stand was grateful for so much action, and, lolling comfortably in the shade, lazily voiced approval of a good punt or a clever catch or chortled merrily over some amusing incident.

At the farther edge of the running track, toward the school buildings, two onlookers sat quite by themselves. One, covered to his waist by a light rug, leaned back at ease in a wheel chair. The second occupied a folding canvas stool set at the left and slightly to the rear of his companion. He was rather tall and rather bony, and, seated bolt upright, the inner edges of his shining black shoes touching, a hand on either knee of his carefully creased black serge trousers, he looked painfully respectable and extremely uncomfortable. The idea must have occurred to the occupant of the chair for he asked, glancing around:

"Comfortable, Wattles?"

"Oh, quite, sir. Absolutely."

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Loring Deane smiled. No one, he was aware, not even the capable Wattles, could be really comfortable for any length of time on one of those silly, backless canvas stools; especially while sitting bolt upright. He had tried to induce Wattles to bring a chair along, offering to carry it in front of him, but Wattles had been frightfully outraged at the bare suggestion. Loring returned to watching the scene, and Wattles, producing an immaculate handkerchief from ~~the~~ the breast pocket of his black coat, removed the black derby from his head and gently mopped a perspiring forehead. Then, handkerchief and hat properly returned to their respective places, hands again on the seams of his trousers, he, too, gave his attention once more to the somewhat astonishing proceedings.

Football of this particular style was new to Wattles. Wattles had been born in England some thirty years ago, and, although he had been in this country ever since the age of nineteen and once a year strode, almost impressively, to the polling booth and cast his vote, he was still English. His speech scarcely betrayed him since he had gone to much pains to acquire the phraseology and accent of his adopted country, but one had only to view his countenance to surprise his secret. Loring's father had once declared that Wattles had the features of a faithful horse. That was perhaps a picturesque exaggeration, but it couldn't be denied that there was something oddly equine in Wattles's face. He had pale brown eyes, a remarkably long and very sizable nose and a chin—well, the best description of

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Wattles's lower features is that, below the straight, slightly loose mouth, they just sort of faded right out of the picture!

"You might at least have worn your straw hat," said the boy severely a few minutes later. "That derby must be beastly hot."

"I don't find it so, Mister Loring," replied Wattles earnestly. "A straw always seems much warmer on the head than a bowl—I should say derby, sir."

"Just your silly British obstinacy," chuckled Loring. "They only discovered straw hats over there a few years ago; after you left, I guess; and I suppose your folks for thousands of years back wore bowler hats on every occasion, summer and winter, and you'd rather be shot than be seen in anything else. To my knowledge you've worn that straw I made you buy just once, and then you looked so miserable I was really sorry for you."

Wattles smiled respectfully. "Without doubt, sir, there's a great deal in heredity."

"And there's a great deal in red-headity, too, Wattles," laughed Loring. "Red-headity means stubbornness."

"Really, sir? I never heard the word. That is, begging your pardon, Mister Loring, I never happened—"

"You wouldn't," agreed the boy. "I just invented it. I guess those fellows are frightfully hot, Wattles. There are some compensations for my enforced in-

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activity after all. Chasing around on a day like this would be a mite uncomfortable, eh?"

"Quite, sir. Perfectly grilling, sir. But are the young gentlemen obliged to exercise so violently?"

"Depends on one's understanding of the word, Wattles. Of course they don't actually *have* to play, but they want to, and when you try for the team you've got to do what you are told to. The man over there in the white shirt is the coach, and his business is to teach those chaps how to play good football, and he has less than two months to do it. I dare say he has a bunch of last year fellows to build around, but there's next year to think of, too, and so he has not only to develop enough players to fill up this season's team, but must supply himself with material to draw on next fall. That means that he has to hustle from the very start, Wattles, and explains why he has those chaps there puffing so hard."

"Yes, sir. I'd no idea the game was quite so—so intensive."

The boy chuckled. "Wattles, your vocabulary is getting richer every day, isn't it?"

"Was it the wrong word, sir?" asked the man anxiously. "I understand—"

"Not at all. Quite proper, in fact. I dare say the English game's a bit less vehement, isn't it?"

"I couldn't say that, Mister Loring. It's played very hard, but I fancy the preparation is not quite so—so severe. I've seen only a few games since I left the other side, sir, and I may be wrong. I gather that

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the sort of football played here is quite different from the English game."

"You've never seen our style of football, have you? Why, yes, I think you'll notice a difference. I dare say they'll be putting on a scrimmage in a day or two, and you'll have a chance to compare the two games."

"I'm sure it will be most interesting, sir."

An escaped football trickled across the running track and came to a stop a few feet from the chair. Wattles, an adventurous gleam in his eyes, started to rise, but a boy in togs was in pursuit, and, crunching across the cinders, scooped up the ball. Wattles relapsed, disappointedly, to his former composure. With the ball in one hand, the player glanced smilingly at the boy in the wheel chair.

"Hello!" he said. "Pretty warm, isn't it?"

"Very," answered Loring. There wasn't time for more, for the rather tall youth with the nice eyes, and the pleasant, friendly smile, turned quickly, dropped the ball, met it with the instep of his right foot and jogged back toward the middle of the playing field. Loring watched the scuffed, brown leather ball arch away on a forty-yard flight, and settle into the arms of a waiting player.

"That's a fellow who spoke to me one night in the corridor, Wattles. Gave me a hand getting into that meeting room. Rather a nice, clean looking chap, isn't he?"

"Very, sir. Quite the gentleman."

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“Yes.” Loring was silent a moment. Then, following a long sigh, he said: “Wattles, I’d give anything in the world if I could do that!”

“Do—I beg your pardon, Mister Loring?”

“What he did, I mean. Just kick a football!”

CHAPTER VII

MR. BABCOCK TAKES HOLD

SATURDAY noon Clif stood on the steps of West Hall and filled his lungs with air. Room G, in Middle, had been more than usually stuffy, and a stiff session with "The Turk" had left the boy feeling rather limp. Generally algebra went fairly smoothly for Clif, but to-day he had floundered badly. It had seemed that Mr. Way, possessed of uncanny power, had surmised Clif's condition and had malignantly, relentlessly exposed it. Yet, although there had been some bad moments, and "The Turk" had displayed his ability for sarcasm, Clif had got through not too disastrously. Retiring from the blackboard, dusting chalk from his fingers, perspiring gently, he had found the boy in the wheel chair regarding him sympathetically from across the room. There had been, too, a twinkle in the chap's eyes that had seemed to say, "Good work! He didn't floor you, anyhow!"

Easing the two books he carried to his other arm, Clif gave a final look at the sunlit lawn that stretched away to the distant tree-bordered street, took a last breath of the warm, fresh air, and turned to reënter the building. But at that moment a big, shining car, standing further along the drive, beyond East Hall

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entrance, came to life and rolled noiselessly forward, and came to a stop at the steps. At about the same instant a group of four persons emerged from the further entrance: a slim, beautifully dressed woman, a black-clothed man in a square-crowned derby hat carrying without evident exertion the boy who, but a few minutes before, had flashed congratulations to Clif across the recitation room, and, lastly, a small Junior School youth. The woman—even at the distance Clif could see that she was remarkably pretty—entered the car, the man in black deposited his burden beside her, the small Junior ensconced himself rather diffidently in the corner, and the derby hat placed itself beside the plum-colored cap of the chauffeur. Then the car moved forward again, gathered speed, and purred softly past West and down the shaded driveway, the poised figure above the radiator glinting in the sunlight. As the car passed the single occupant of the West Hall steps, Loring Deane leaned across the younger boy beside him and waved. Clif waved back, but too late to be seen.

He watched the car out of sight, approving the speckless luster of its long, sleek body, its smooth, almost soundless progress. Even the blue and white number plate at the rear shone immaculately, seeming to proclaim not only that the owner was a resident of New York, but that he was the possessor of great wealth, since, or so Clif had long since concluded, only those of great wealth were able to drive about in cars as immaculate as this one! The lady was, he supposed,

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Deane's mother. Since Saturday was a half-holiday she was probably taking him home for a visit. He found himself envying the small Junior who, tucked into the corner, hadn't looked as though he was half appreciating his luck.

But Clif's guess proved wrong later. When the game with Freeburg High School began at three o'clock the big dark blue car was standing at the farther side of the gridiron, beyond the running track. The Junior was no longer in it. Mrs. Deane and Loring were the sole occupants, Loring's attendant and the chauffeur being seated together on the grass a short distance away. Clif drew Tom's attention to the car and Tom said: "Gosh! It's one of those English whatyoucall-ems, isn't it? Say, that's some cart, if you want to know! You say that's Mrs. Deane? What's she like?"

"Awfully pretty," said Clif emphatically. "I wasn't very close to them, but she looked corking."

"Yes, but if you have plenty of money you can look like—like Venus herself, I guess," answered Tom pessimistically. "Maybe close to she wouldn't look so wonderful."

"Yes, she would," said Clif stoutly. "I'll bet you anything—"

But as Freeburg kicked off just then the conversation ended abruptly.

Clif and Tom watched the game from the ground beside the track. There was no room for them on the benches, nor for a dozen more equally unimportant members of the squad, and so they spread their blue

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blankets on the grass and sat cross-legged while the battle raged. As a football contest that first game of the Wyndham schedule didn't amount to very much, but since it gave the School its first opportunity to see their heroes in action, it secured a full attendance. Freeburg presented a light team which tried to make speed atone for weight, and didn't quite succeed, as the final score attested. Both coaches used the occasion to try out a long list of substitutes and the game was considerably slowed up because of the constant changes. Wyndham's line contained four veterans, and her backfield two when the game began. Captain Lothrop, playing his third season at Wyndham, was at left guard, Archer at left end, Higgs at center, Stoddard at quarter, Jensen at right half and Fargo at full back. These men constituted the nucleus on which the coaches hoped to build a winning team, and there appeared to be no reason why they shouldn't succeed. Beside the real veterans there were at least another half-dozen candidates who had served last year either as First Team substitutes or Second Team players. And there were, of course, a considerable number of less experienced youths from the class teams, or, like Clif and Tom, from outside. Coach Otis did not appear to lack material, even though the first grand total of something over sixty had now been reduced to about fifty. Before the Freeburg game was at an end—ten-minute periods were played—"G.G." had watched no fewer than thirty-one candidates perform. Sad to relate, however, neither Clif nor Tom were among the

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number. They were allowed to sit undisturbed throughout the contest.

The playing was fairly ragged on both sides, and the game lacked interest. The day was much too warm for football, and the home team and the visitors alike suffered. The Dark Blue held to a tackle-to-tackle offense, and only twice offered anything in the way of aerial attack. Then two short passes over the end of the line were tried with negative results. Most of Wyndham's gains were made between the opposing guards and tackles. Once or twice the Freeburg center was battered down, but the youth who occupied the pivotal position for the visitors was extremely capable and turned back most of the plays directed against him. The Dark Blue put over one touchdown in the first period, and hung up seven points. In the next quarter a second touchdown was added, but Stoddard missed the try-at-goal. Freeburg forced the fighting after half-time, and produced the only thrilling incident of the performance when her quarter got loose with the ball near his own forty-yard line, and ran to Wyndham's seven. There he was pulled down by Ogden, playing right half for Jensen, and the exultant shouts of the Freeburg rooters were cut short. But they broke forth again some two minutes later when, following two unsuccessful tries at the Dark Blue line, a fleet-footed substitute was shot into the visitor's line-up, and took the pigskin on a wide run around his left end, placing it a scant twelve inches from the goal line. With one down remaining, Freeburg con-

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centrated on Quinlan, at left guard, and smashed through for a score. A minute afterwards she turned the 6 into a 7. Just before that third period ended the Dark Blue hammered her way across the enemy goal-line for a third touchdown from which, again, no goal resulted. The final quarter witnessed the introduction of practically two fresh teams but produced no scoring. Wyndham chalked up a 19 to 7 victory to start the season's schedule.

Talking the game over that evening, Clif and Tom arrived almost simultaneously at the same conclusion, which, as Tom put it, was this: "You and I, old son, have about as much chance to make the team this year as I have to win the Condon Prize for English! Why, heck, no one knows we're on the squad! That coach doesn't even see us."

"You're right, I guess," Clif agreed sadly. "That bunch is too big and too heavy for us to associate with. What we'd better do is quit and put in our time beefing up."

"It isn't only that, because some of the fellows who played to-day—or tried to—weren't so blamed big, but that Otis dumb-bell can't see any fellow outside the little bunch he's nursed from last year. The trouble with us is we're outsiders, Clif. What we need is advertising, I guess. Say, that's an idea! Let's put an ad in next week's *Lantern*. Something like this: 'Mr. Clifton Bingham and Mr. Thomas Kemble present their compliments to the Football Committee, and Coaches, and solicit their patronage.' Hold on, though.

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This is better: 'Experienced end and clever half-back want positions on Football Team. Interview arranged. Address "Neglected," care *Lantern*.' How's that?"

"I don't believe the Committee ever reads the *Lantern*," said Clif.

"They ought to, for it's a very truthful publication. Like last week when it said that sixty-something candidates were 'frying for the Team.' Maybe it meant to say 'trying,' but, considering the weather, it was dead right. Well, the best we can expect, Clif, is to make the Second; and we may get left there!"

"I don't see how. They've got to have somebody for it, and if Mr. Otis makes another cut Monday, as they say he's going to, there won't be many left."

"Huh! Maybe we'll be among the—the cutes! Oh, well, never say die. Let's go down and see what they're getting on the radio."

There was a brand-new notice on the board outside the locker room door on Monday when Clif reached the gymnasium, and his heart missed a beat as he stopped to read it. He was alone, since Tom had a late recitation, and he was glad of it just then. "Attention Football Candidates," he read. "The following players will report to Coach Babcock on Second Team field at 3:30 Monday: Adams, Ames, Bingham—"

Clif drew a long breath. His feelings oddly combined disappointment and relief. For the first moment disappointment was uppermost, but then the realization that he had long since discounted being dropped from the First Team, and that as lately as Saturday

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evening he had been doubtful of making the Second, produced a reaction. He guessed he was pretty lucky, after all. There were only some twenty names on this list, which meant that fully a dozen fellows had been dropped completely. Then his eyes hurried down the first column and across to the second. "Howlett, Jackson, Kemble—"

Good! Tom had made it, too! Then, as he went on into the locker room, it occurred to him that perhaps Tom wouldn't be as gratified as he was. Perhaps Tom, in spite of his pessimistic utterances, had secretly expected to be retained on the First! But later in the afternoon Tom scouted the idea with convincing sincerity.

"I hadn't the ghost of a chance, Clif, and I knew it the second day of practice. I can play football pretty well, but I haven't had the experience fellows like Dave Lothrop and Billy Desmond and Pete Jensen and a lot more have had. And, of course, I'm light. No, sir, I'm satisfied to be here, old son. Besides, I'm going to get a lot of fun out of showing some of those First Team swelled-heads that they don't know all the football there is, as good as they may be! Heck, I'm not kicking!"

And neither was Clif. In fact, after listening to Mr. Babcock's talk to them on the old wooden baseball grand stand that had been moved aside to make room for the gridiron, he had begun to wonder whether being a member of so glorious a company as the Scrub wasn't a far better thing than belonging to the First

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Team! Of course common sense told him later that it wasn't, but Mr. Babcock had almost made it seem so for the moment!

• “Cocky” seemed to have left behind him in the gymnasium some of the brusqueness that awed his classes. To-day he acted and looked and spoke like a “regular fellow.” He had on a pair of old canvas football pants, a faded red sweater and two of the most disreputable gray woolen stockings ever seen out of a rag bag. Those stockings had been frequently and variously darned until there remained but very little of the original material; and despite all the mending they still cried out for help. “Cocky’s” sturdy calves were visible in wide areas in more places than one! “Cocky” wasn’t a handsome man, for his face was too square, his nose too blunt and his eyebrows too heavy. To be frank, Mr. Henry Babcock, B.A., looked rather like a retired gentleman pugilist; or, perhaps, like one’s idea of such a person. He was about thirty years old, affected very loose tweed suits and, between the hours of five and six, behind the closed door of Number 19 East Hall, played weird melodies on an English horn. Any one who has ever heard an English horn engaged in rendering a solo will understand why the door was closed!

“I’ve got a little speech to make, fellows,” said “Cocky,” spreading a pair of muscular arms along the edge of the seat behind him, “so you’d better sit down, and make yourselves comfortable for a few minutes. Now, then, you know what a Scrub Team

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is for, but perhaps you don't realize just how important it is. This School sets out every year at about this time to beat Wolcott. That's what we all want to do; you and I, and Doctor Wyndham and Coach Otis and every fellow, big or little, who owes allegiance to Wyndham. To beat Wolcott we must have a whopping good team, a better team this year than last, maybe. We have a pretty stiff schedule arranged; eight games; three of them away from home; planned to bring us along slowly and surely to the final contest. When that comes along our team must be in top form, trained to the minute. That may sound easy, but it's really pretty hard. It means lots of work, work that gets a little harder day by day; it means attention to diet, strict watch on the physical condition of every man, for it's quite as easy to overtrain as to train too little; and it means putting into practice every day what you have learned the day before. That's where we come in, fellows.

"Our business is to beat Wolcott, just as it is the First Team's business. We do it—if we succeed—by helping the First to learn how. There's glory in that, fellows, lots of glory. I want you to realize it. I want you to start in with the conviction that you are doing your share to secure a Wyndham victory over Wolcott. I want you to be just as proud of being a Second Team player as you'd be of belonging to the First. When the big day comes the cheers won't be for you, maybe, but you'll know in your hearts that you deserve a share of them, and you'll be satisfied

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with what you've done, and proud of your team, the team that showed the big team how to win!

"I've handled this team for four years, fellows, and I've always enjoyed it, always taken pride in it, always felt a mighty lot of satisfaction, when the season was done, over my part in the victory or the defeat that came to us. Because you mustn't think, any of you, that there isn't honor in defeat. The team that plays cleanly, gallantly, fights its hardest when Luck turns its back, is downed and won't stay downed, wins honor indeed. Well, now, here we are. Twenty of us. 'Mr. Babcock's Team,' the 'Second' or the 'Scrub.' Call yourself what you like. It doesn't make much difference what we're called or what we call ourselves, so long as we do what's expected of us with all our might. So let's get together, fellows, and show Wyndham the finest, fightingest Second Team it has ever seen! Remember this, too. You're not only helping to win the Wolcott game this year, you're training yourself for next year. You Second Team fellows will be First Team fellows next fall. Most of you, anyhow. It isn't unlikely that one or two of you will get to the big team this season. Just show Mr. Otis that you've got something the First Team needs, and you won't stay here long!

"Just so that it won't be all work and no play, I've arranged three outside games for you. We'll play Freeburg High School a week from next Saturday, Minster High School on November third, and the Wolcott Second Team on November tenth. We could

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have more games if we were permitted to play away from home. But we aren't, and I think three will be enough, anyhow. So now you know what's ahead of you, Scrub. A lot of steady, grinding work, a little play, and virtue more or less its own reward. Who's for it?"

It was evident that all were. A shout went up from twenty throats that carried as far as the diamond and aroused interest and conjecture there. Having joined his voice with the others, Clif turned and looked rather pityingly toward the First Team field. Those poor chaps over there didn't realize what they were missing! Mr. Babcock was speaking again. He was on his feet now, and in response to the suggestion of his movement the fellows were leaving the seats.

"We'll have the first scrimmage with the other gang about Friday. That gives us four days to get ready. I'd suggest that before the Freeburg game you elect a captain. But don't do it just yet. Wait until you've played together awhile. Until you choose a leader for yourself you'll need some one in authority, though, and so I'll appoint Henning temporary captain."

"Cheer for Captain Clem!" laughed some one.

Clement Henning grinned sheepishly. He was a big First Class fellow who had played guard for two years on scrub teams. He was steady, hard working, good-natured and slow. Last season, for a brief and glorious fortnight, he had been transferred to the big team, but he couldn't hold down his job there, and had returned, untroubled, it appeared, to the Scrub. Clem

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could play football to a certain point, but he never could get beyond that point. It is probable that all the coaches in the country, working together on him in relays, would have failed to make Clem play any better than he had played last year or would play this. But if he lacked football genius he was long on popularity. Every one knew Clem Henning and every one liked him.

The cheer wasn't given, but the selection met with sounds of approval from all. "Cocky" went on, briskly now:

"We're going to start right at the very bottom, fellows. No one who can't make a good tackle or handle the ball properly is good enough for this outfit. We'll have some passing now to warm up, and as soon as the First is through with the dummy we'll go down there, and eat some dirt. We'll divide the squad, Captain Henning, and you'll take half and I'll take half. All right, let's have those balls, Hoppin. Over here, a bunch of you. Now then, Scrub, let's get going!"

CHAPTER VIII

MR. BINGHAM PAYS A VISIT

THAT first feeling of exaltation didn't last long, but it had served its purpose. The Wyndham Scrub members had shared it together and, since the experience of a common emotion creates a bond, had become imbued with a solidarity that was to prove the foundation of greater unity and cohesion. Which was all that Mr. Babcock had expected.

On Tuesday the Scrub had its first line-up and ran through a few formations. Adams was at left end, Ames at left tackle, Greene at left guard, Ridgway at center, Henning at right guard, Coles at right tackle, Bingham at right end, Jackson at quarter, Kemble at left half, Stiles at right half and Thayer at fullback. But as "Cocky" explicitly stated that no one could be sure of his position until he had definitely earned it, and as none save Henning and "Wink" Coles kept his place throughout the whole half-hour, neither Clif nor Tom indulged in self-congratulation. Clif had Patch and Gosman to fight for the right end position, and Tom was always aware that Gillespie and Heard were following close behind, awaiting their turns. Mr. Babcock made them work hard, but they had plenty of enthusiasm and liked working. Now and then a

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word, or perhaps a brief halt while the coach stared silently toward the First Team players, kept the incentive in mind. They were there to mold themselves into a first-class fighting unit so that they might meet the friendly enemy on fairly even terms, and so serve as the whetstone against which the latter was to be shaped and edged into a conquering weapon. But—and they dwelt relishingly on this—if the whetstone sometimes proved too hard for the steel, why, so much the better for every one! In other words, duty demanded that they prove themselves a worthy foe, and inclination kept a full jump ahead of duty! There were no personal grudges being nursed: no player on the Scrub had a bone to pick with any member of the other team; but there was, nevertheless, the conviction, shared by all, that the wisdom of the Head Coach's selections had yet to be proved, and it was up to them to show that proof didn't exist! In such a spirit, then, the Wyndham Scrub Team—or "Mr. Babcock's Team," as the *Lantern* called it—started forth.

The first meeting of the Scrub and the First took place in a drizzle of rain and, partly for that reason, but more especially because Mr. Otis's charges had a game the next day, the encounter was slow and tame. There were two scrimmages of some ten minutes each, the first with the first-string line-up, and the second with the substitutes. Play was continually stopped by the Head Coach for criticism and instruction, the ball was brought back half a dozen times because something had not gone just right, and, finally, when the

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pigskin had been slapped down on the soggy ground close to the Scrub's fifteen-yard line by Captain Lothrop after a savage romp through the enemy's left wing, "G.G." ordered a dropkick, and Houston, playing quarter, mishandled the wet ball so that it banged into the crowd, and was chased to the side-line and downed by Clif. It was only in the second period, however, when faced by the First Team substitutes that the Scrub could show any offense. Then, with fewer interruptions, the Second's backs got to working and made the most of the opponents' right side, slamming through a dozen times before they were finally stopped. But the First Team's twelve yards was the nearest the Scrubs could approach to the goal, and from there, when two tries had been smeared, Sim Jackson booted for a miss. A few minutes later a First Team substitute, and a third-string man at that, scooped up a trickling ball and galloped for some forty yards to the Scrub's goal-line, making the only score of the day, and registering the Scrub's first defeat. On the whole, Mr. Babcock's warriors didn't cover themselves with glory during their première. The coach, patiently and cheerfully explaining their shortcomings afterwards, was, it seemed, far less depressed than the players.

"What was wrong to-day can be corrected to-morrow," he ended. "I'm not expecting you fellows to play perfect football yet. I'm satisfied if you realize your mistakes when you make them, and I think you do. You won't make me mad until you make the same

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mistakes the second time—or the third. When a player knows he's wrong there's hope for him: when he can't see it, he's useless. Some of you fellows showed real stuff to-day. You, Jackson, for one. You mixed only one signal, and you kept your team on the jump. And Ridgway held the center nicely. And two or three others of you deserve a good word; Bingham, for instance. There was no one within two yards of him when he got that ball after the blocked kick. Remember, fellows, that every loose ball has 'Touchdown' written on it in big red letters! Patch, you'd better let Farrell see that hand. Looks rather like a dislocation from the swelling. We'll try to get started at two to-morrow, fellows, so that we can see some of the game. I want every one of you to watch the First Team players carefully every chance you get. Keep your eye on the men you'll play against and see where they're weak. And try to guess the plays before they start. Watch the backs and see what you can learn from the way they stand. Some players will give away the play time and again if you know the language of signs!"

Clif wasn't nearly as excited over his father's visit on the morrow as he had expected to be. Of course he was awfully glad he was coming, and he wanted to see him a whole lot and there were loads of things he had saved up to tell him, but he went to sleep that Friday night as soon as his head touched the pillow and awoke the next morning to only the mildest thrill. Mr. Bingham rolled up the drive in the blue car about

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one o'clock, and Clif, who had hurried through his dinner, was awaiting him at the steps. Mr. Bingham said "Hello, son," very casually, and Clif grinned, and said "Hello, dad" in much the same tone. But they shook hands very hard and, after the car had been parked at the end of the drive, they made their way to Number 17 with the older man's arm about the boy's shoulder. Clif was a little bit conscious of that arm as they passed the recreation room and Office, but he carried off the situation gracefully. If any of the fellows they met felt any inclination toward ridicule Clif's sharp eyes failed to detect the fact. Generally what he read on their passing countenances was admiration for that well-built, handsome, smiling father of his, and Clif forgot his momentary embarrassment and was proud and pleased.

Oddly enough—or so it seemed to Clif—his father and Walter Treat took to each other instantly, and Clif was a trifle annoyed to discover that Walter's acceptance of his father seemed more important to him than his father's approval of Walter! Just as though, he reflected later as he hurried away to the field, it mattered a bit what Walter thought! But he was glad that his roommate had offered to look after the visitor during practice. They didn't meet again until the Scrub Team, released after an hour's strenuous work, invaded the grand stand to witness the last half of the contest with Highland School. Walter had somehow managed to occupy the better part of two seats and Clif squeezed himself down beside his father.

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The Dark Blue had scored a field-goal in the second period, but had not been able to cross the enemy's goal-line. Highland, playing a far better defensive than offensive game, had failed to score. In the third quarter Fargo and Jenkins between them took the ball to the enemy's eleven yards from where a forward-pass grounded, and from where, on fourth down, Fargo's end run was stopped on the eight yards. It was not until late in the last period that Wyndham got her second score. Then, after a long run by Whitemill had brought the battle to Highland's thirty-yard line. Fargo dashed past tackle for eight, threw across center to Archer for nine more, and then took the ball on the thirteen yards and, with the other backs faking a tandem on the right of center, tore through on the left, shook off three tackles and crossed the goal-line standing up!

Stoddard was hurried in the try-for-point, but the ball shot off to the right, and Wyndham had to be satisfied with nine points as her share of the afternoon's diversion. Highland had nothing left to offer in the way of attack, and the rest of the final period passed with the ball see-sawing back and forth about the center of the field, Coach Otis sending in substitutes lavishly, and the stand gradually emptying.

There was just time to ride into the village with dad and see him safely settled at the Inn before six o'clock. Then Clif hurried back to supper, secured permission to spend the evening outside, and, feeling a wee bit important, strode down the drive at seven, dressed

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in his best. Mr. Bingham had discovered a billiard table at the Inn, and was knocking the balls around when Clif found him. "Get your cue, son," he said. "You'll find one there with a tip if you look hard. I haven't whaled you for a long time!"

Clif, who didn't care much for billiards, consented to humor the other, but he had no idea of spending the evening in such unexciting fashion, and when eight o'clock arrived he hauled an unenthusiastic parent across the street to Freeburg's one palace of amusement, the Coliseum. The Coliseum was about the size of the library back home in Providence, but it was clean and it offered good, if not recent, pictures. Mr. Bingham professed to be greatly awed by the red, white and blue splendor of the exterior and embarrassed Clif somewhat by insisting on viewing the gaudy and startling pictures in the small lobby painstakingly before purchasing tickets from the interested young lady who chewed her gum so rhythmically inside the glass cage. Aware of the curious stares of theater-going Freeburg, Clif tugged at his father's arm.

"Oh, come on, dad!" he begged.

But Mr. Bingham was not to be hurried. "I want to be sure," he declared sedately, "that everything is quite proper, Clif. You know there's a good deal being said these days about the influence of moving pictures on the young, and I'd very much dislike to have you tell me in later years that you traced your downfall to the night I took you to see—now what the dickens—ah, here it is—to see 'Outlawed by

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Honor'! To me, Clif, this man, Johnny Rick, looks rather a desperate character. Isn't he killing the gentleman with the drooping, black mustache in that picture?"

"Aw, dad!" whispered Clif.

"All right, but I'll ask for seats well away from the stage, son. Pistol shooting always makes me jump."

In spite of the fun Mr. Bingham poked at the entertainment provided by the Coliseum that evening, it would have been apparent to any one that he got more pleasure from it than the more blasé Clif. He became visibly excited when, in the fourth reel, the redoubtable hero, the aforementioned Mr. Rick, dashed into the deserted cabin, seized the heroine in his elastic-banded arms, with not even a glance at the sizzling fuse that led to the enormous can of dynamite, dashed out again and spurred his faithful horse to safety. Of course Clif knew perfectly well that the cabin wouldn't blow up until the hero was well out of the way, but apparently the idea hadn't occurred to his father, for the latter relapsed, exhausted by emotion, against Clif's shoulder. Fathers are sometimes very trying.

On Sunday there was a banquet for four at the Inn. Clif had all along intended to invite Tom to dinner on this occasion, but the inclusion of Walter in the party had been Mr. Bingham's idea. Not that Clif really minded. It merely hadn't and wouldn't have occurred to him. Walter was rather an addition, as it turned out, for "the beggar could talk about any-

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thing," as Tom put it, and Tom didn't care a great deal who talked so long as he was able to devote himself undisturbedly to the chief matter in hand, which on this occasion was putting away a very considerable amount of broiled chicken and appropriate trimmings. Walter and Mr. Bingham became involved in an earnest, though friendly, argument over the coffee, as to the relative values of classical and practical educations, a discussion that rather bored the others. After the question had been settled to the satisfaction of both contenders, following the yielding of much ground by each, the car was brought forth from a nearby garage, and, with Clif at the wheel and Tom beside him, they set forth to see as much of the world as was practicable in the two hours left at Mr. Bingham's disposal.

They got back to West Hall at a quarter past four and Mr. Bingham said good-by and swung the car toward Providence. Saying good-by this time hadn't been hard at all, Clif thought as he followed Walter and Tom into the Hall. He felt a little guilty about it.

On Monday the Scrub had an easy session when it went over to the enemy's lair, for many of the latter, all those who had taken any considerable part in the Highland game, had been excused. The Scrub showed up better, under these circumstances, and scored twice to the First Team's once. Although the honor of making the first score of the season fell to Sim Jackson when he booted an easy field-goal, to Thomas Ackerman Kemble was credited the first crossing of the enemy's goal-line. That historic event occurred in the

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last period when, held for three downs by a horde of substitutes writhing under "G.G.'s" caustic comments, Sim slipped the pigskin to Tom on a delayed pass, and Tom flashed around the right and wormed through in some remarkable way, reaching the goal-line without much opposition until a frantic back tackled and accompanied him across the last two yards. Being unable to shake off the enemy, Tom just took him along.

Although the Scrub's victory had been secured from a much weakened First, it held some glory, and the Scrub made the most of it. It gave them confidence, and the next afternoon, when the first-string men were back on the job, Mr. Babcock's disciples showed quite a nice brand of football. Of course the First had its way in the end, but it had to fight for it, and fight hard. Ike Patch started at left end for the Scrub, but Clif displaced him after five minutes, and was allowed to play through. Ever since Clif had chased down that loose ball on Friday "Cocky" had seemed to hold him in deep respect, and Tom, not at all certain of his own position, declared that Clif had "vamped" the coach, and was settled for the season. Clif began to believe it himself by Wednesday.

On that afternoon the audience, looking on from a windswept stand and shivering under sweaters, saw a very pretty practice game. The Scrubs romped in from the suburbs armed with three brand-new plays meticulously designed by Mr. Babcock to take advantage of the enemy's weaknesses. The principal weak-

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ness just then was the lack of a good defense against forward-passes, and although the Scrub had yet to show any startling proficiency in passing, "Cocky" had provided two plays that might benefit his team. These plays, together with a third that didn't rely on tossing the ball into the teeth of an October gale for success, had been hastily and not too thoroughly taught that afternoon, and Sim Jackson's brain was still roiled by his attempt to add this fresh matter to all the other stored there. The Scrub Team to-day was on its toes from the start. Somehow it had become imbued with the notion that it was *good!* And when a team gets that idea in its head, and is willing to work like the dickens to prove that it is correct, why, that team is hard to stop.

To-day was no sort of day to slow up play for instruction, and so Mr. Otis swallowed many remarks that almost choked him and let the battle surge. And it surely surged. The very appearance of the Scrub players had been an affront, with their cocksure swaggering as they took the field, and now, with the war on, their behavior was preposterously insulting. The poor weaklings, culls from the First Team orchard, so to speak, acted as if they thought themselves real timber! It was well-nigh sickening to First Team sensibilities, and so the First Team set itself to inflict disciplinary punishment. For a while it seemed that the Scrub was due to emerge from the engagement with a chastened spirit, but that was only for a while, and a brief while at that. Having allowed the First

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to reach the fourteen yards, though far from willingly, the Scrub dug its cleats, and gave an excellent imitation of a stone wall. Against that wall Quarterback Stoddard dashed Fargo and Jensen and Fargo again, and when the three attempts had been made the wall was scarcely dented. The First was plainly puzzled; puzzled and angry too. But that any Scrub—at least any Scrub so recently born—could actually hold the first for four downs was unthinkable, and so, scorning to be satisfied with the three points a field-goal would have given, Stoddard unwisely pulled Captain Lothrop out of the line and instructed him, by means of signals, to bust through and put the ball down not short of the four yards. Unfortunately, Stoddard lost track of the fact that Dave's place at left guard was being handed over to Sproule, playing half instead of Whitemill. When the ball was snapped, Clem Henning drew Sproule forward on his nose, strode over him and stopped Captain Dave neatly and expeditiously for a gain of some eighteen inches. Dazed, First yielded the pigskin.

Any one knows that the only thing to do when the ball comes into your possession close to your goal is to punt it away from there. So Sim did something else! He called "Kemble back!" the ball was shot to Tom from center, and Tom took three steps back and to his left, and swept the pigskin down the field with an overhand spiral throw. Clif had let the opposing end by outside, evaded a back and was clear. Not far behind him ran Sim. Toward them both came the ball.

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Sim turned, looked and panted: "Take it!" Clif whirled, stood and held his hands out. Never before in a contest had he ever attempted a long catch of a forward-pass, and he wished devoutly that the ball had gone to Sim. Without seeing he knew that the whole field of players was converging on him. Then the ball struck his hands, and by some miracle, as it seemed to him, stuck! Turning quickly, he had a blurred vision of Sim crashing into an opponent. The background of the brief picture was a confusion of moving bodies, looming larger with each instant.

Then he dug out, the ball tucked firmly between arm and body, his right hand outstretched for action. He could run, could Clif, and he ran now, but there was the First Team quarter bearing diagonally across to intercept him, and the fleet Jensen was close behind. It seemed to Clif that he had taken but a dozen strides when Jensen shot for him, and, despite his plunge to the right, caught him, and brought him crashing down, and yet when he was pulled, breathless, to his feet a moment later, there was the fifty-yard line behind the ball! Somehow he had successfully caught a thirty-yard pass, and carried it seventeen yards further! The Scrub assailed him as one man, and did him painful honor!

The First was disgruntled, and Mr. Otis's disgusted observations did little to soothe it. Tom, smiting Clif mightily between his shoulders and depriving him momentarily of what little breath he had left after being thumped to earth by Stoddard, and sat on by Jensen,

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grinned expansively and shouted "Good stuff," old son! That's the way to treat 'em!"

Sim called on Thayer for a fullback buck and Johnny was piled up with a sickening thud. The First was through with nonsense! Stiles tried to slip off tackle, and was thrown for a loss, but a too-eager First Team end had been off-side and the ball went to the forty-four, and it was still second down. Stiles tried the same play again and got a yard. Kemble went back and Sim cut through for three. Kemble punted to the five-yard line, and Jensen ran the ball back to the seventeen.

Fargo made two and then four through Greene. Sproule, on an end run, added two more and Fargo punted short to the Scrub's forty-six, where the ball went out. Adams lost three yards on an end-round play. Kemble went back to punting position, and, with a widespread formation, hurled to the left for twelve yards, where Stiles pulled it down, only to lose it. Thayer took Kemble's place up-field, but the ball went to Kemble instead, and he raced back behind Thayer and again threw forward, this time far down the field. The throw was hurried, for the First piled through desperately, and were all around Tom when the ball got away. Thayer, however, did good work as defense, and the pass reached its destination. The destination was Jeff Adams, right end. Jeff had crossed behind the enemy, and was uncovered. The rest is history.

CHAPTER IX

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JEFF had just twenty-eight yards to go for a touchdown, and he covered twenty-two of them before he was threatened. Then Drayton, right end, overhauled him. But after the tackle Jeff made three good yards, and when the whistle sounded, the pigskin lay no more than four feet from the last white-washed streak. A horn tooted hoarsely, but "G.G." would have none of it.

"Play on," he ordered grimly. "Two minutes more, First!"

The Scrub exulted. They would have cheered Mr. Otis if there had been time. The First set grimly to work to hold the enemy at bay, and Thayer's first smash at the line netted inches only. But neither Sim nor the big fullback was discouraged. Four feet was only four feet, and Johnny could take that in a stride! But he had to have a hole, and the center of the First's panting, crouching line offered not even a crevice. So Sim shifted to his right, playing beyond end himself, and the Scrub drove straight ahead, wedging between guard and tackle, and Thayer shot up and forward, and the whistle blew and the ball was over!

To make assurances doubly sure, Sim Jackson gave way to Hoppin, and "Hop," standing safely away

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from his line, took a long and rather ragged pass from "Babe" Ridgway, and toed it neatly over the bar. And the Scrub had scored on the First—the real, honest-to-goodness First, and not a mess of substitutes—and every one was happy. Every one, that is, except the First!

The period ended a minute later, and the Scrub went carousing away to the lee of the stand and pulled blankets about them, and talked it all over gleefully. Perhaps they made more of it than it was worth, both then and later, but, on the other hand, perhaps they didn't. It might, you see, be a long, long time before they had another chance to celebrate any such decisive victory as they had scored that day!

There was more to follow, but it wasn't likely that Mr. Otis would put the same line-up back. Nor did he. A few first string forwards faced the Scrub in the second scrimmage, but they melted away as time went on, giving place to substitutes until at last a whole new team fought for the honor of the First. And Mr. Babcock freshened his bunch, too. He didn't have enough men for a whole new team, but he did the best he could, and only Clem Henning and "Wink" Coles played to the end. Clif didn't see any work in that session, while Tom dropped out soon after the start to make way for Ike Patch. They crouched together, bundled under their own blankets and another, and watched intensely. To you or me that second scrimmage wouldn't have proved very interesting. In fact, I doubt if either of us would have stayed two

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minutes out there in that chilling gale. But Clif and Tom found the spectacle a most thrilling one, groaning when "Swede" Hanbury, the second-string full back, romped through the Scrub for twelve long yards and exulting shrilly when "Wink" plunged through and fell on a fumbled ball at a moment when disaster threatened the Scrub, seven yards from its goal. Yes, though neither side scored, though misplays were frequent and opportunities wasted, Clif and Tom found the contest heart-filling enough.

That evening the Scrub was carelessly enough christened with a name that stuck the season through. Some unknown witness of the afternoon's struggle uttered the phrase, and it met with favor from a listener, and was repeated, probably as his own, and by the next afternoon it had captured popularity, and written itself into school language. After that it was never, save officially or in the polite pages of *The Lantern*, "Mr. Babcock's Team." Nor was it the "Second." It was the "Fighting Scrub."

That was a name to live up to, and the Scrub, from Adams to Tyson, taking it alphabetically, resolved to merit it. Mr. Babcock smiled in his sleeve. He believed in fight. Fighting, though, won't always win, especially if the odds against the fighter are long. And if the Scrub thought to repeat its victory of Thursday right away it was doomed to disappointment. Because on Friday, during the brief ten minutes of real scrimmage that took place, the First, having knocked together a hasty and temporary defense against forward-

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passes, seized the Scrub by the nape of its neck and fairly wiped up the gridiron with it. Smarting under the defeat of the day before, and the gibes of its school-mates, it sought vengeance and obtained it in hand-fulls. It scored two touchdowns and followed the second with a goal, and later, in the gymnasium, held up thirteen points for the infuriation of the Scrub. The Scrub, which had "rubbed it in" good and hard yesterday, tried its best to grin and found the effort painful.

That evening twenty youths crowded into Clem Henning's room, which he shared with Jimmy Ames, and, occupying practically every horizontal surface therein, set about the election of a captain. A week before the undertaking had not seemed important. Any fellow would do; especially Clem, who was already holding down the job temporarily. But since a week ago the lowly Scrub had become the Fighting Scrub. It had seen service, acquired traditions, and won honor. It was no longer merely twenty youths brought together by chance. It was a fellowship, a fraternity, a shoulder-to-shoulder clan. It was—well, it was the Fighting Scrub! And so the election of a leader had suddenly become a matter of vast importance, something to be done carefully, and only after much thought.

A good deal of the thinking had been done by Tom, and he had shared some of his thoughts with Clif. But not all, as it turned out. "I was talking with Clem Henning this afternoon," Tom announced on Wed-

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nesday, "and he says he doesn't want to be captain. Says he won't be if he has to."

"Guess it will be Coles, then," said Clif.

"Coles is all right. But how about Jimmy Ames?"

"Ames? Why, I don't know. I like Coles better. Or Stiles."

"Stiles, eh? We-ell, yes, maybe. You know, Clif, I wouldn't say no if they offered it to me."

"Offered what?"

"Captaincy."

"A fat chance," jeered Clif. "One of the old fellows will get it, of course. Henning ought to take it. He's a First Class fellow. Either he or Ames."

"I don't see that it matters what your class is," Tom demurred. "I'm not saying I'm expecting to get it, of course, but if some one nominated me I'll bet I'd get four or five votes. It would be fun to see, eh?"

But Clif didn't enthuse greatly. "That may be your idea of fun, Tom, but it isn't mine. To stand for election just to see yourself licked is crazy."

"Heck, what's the difference if you are licked? Say, if any of the crowd should put me up, vote for me once anyway, like a good guy, will you?"

"I'll second the nomination, if it's done," laughed Clif, "but I'd like to know who you think's going to put you up!"

"Well, some one might. You can't tell. Some one might do it just to be funny."

"I don't think it would be so blamed funny," said Clif, slightly indignant. "If it comes right down to

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brass tacks, I guess you'd make a good enough captain—with me to help you!"

Mr. Babcock had declined an invitation to be present on the momentous occasion, and so it was Clem Henning who coughed loudly, and said that they were there to elect a captain, and he guessed they'd better get at it, and that so far as he was concerned, he was out of it entirely because he didn't know how to be a captain, and it was too pesky much trouble anyway!

Much protestation followed, some of it perhaps polite rather than sincere, and several fellows tried to talk at once. "Wink" Coles finally got a hearing, and declared that Clem was the man for the job, and why not elect him, and pay no attention to what he said. Gillespie, known as "Gilly," got quite eloquent, and reminded them that they should elect one of their number who possessed the gift of leadership, and placed in nomination Pat Tyson. The applause was rather for the eloquence than the nominee, it seemed. Then Jackson proposed "Babe" Ridgway and "Babe" declined in a panic. After that proceedings slowed up. Clif, observing Tom, laughed to himself. Although Tom seemed to have not a care in the world, Clif thought he could detect anxiety. Evidently it occurred to no one to nominate Tom, even as a joke, and Clif was wondering whether to do it himself when Thayer was offered as a candidate. The applause was flattering, but the meeting had certainly not been stampeded, and Johnny, himself, was rewarding his

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sponsor with a malignant scowl. Clem spoke again from his precarious seat on the radiator—which, fortunately, was not radiating to-night—and suggested that they get busy and do something, because it would be study hour in about ten minutes.

“Maybe we’d better ballot. Jimmy, tear up a couple of sheets of paper from my block, will you? So far the candidates are Tyson, Ridgway—”

“Nothing doing!” protested “Babe.”

“—and Thayer. But I’m going to nominate another. I like the captain to be a backfield chap. After that he ought to play well enough to be certain of his place (laughter), and he ought to have a whole lot of fight and pep. In fact—” and Clem’s eyes twinkled—“he ought to be a fellow who can go after what he wants and get it. I nominate Kemble.”

There was a brief instant of surprise, surprise plainly, oh, so plainly shared by Tom! Then came an astonishing amount of applause, astonishing at least to Clif, who was reprehensibly late in joining in it. Tom was shaking his head, not so much negatively as doubtfully. “Heck, fellows, I’m new around here, and I guess you want a fellow who’s been here longer. Henning says he won’t take it, but if we show him we need him—”

“I’m out,” declared Clem, grinning across at Tom. “Let’s vote.”

Jimmy Ames distributed slips of paper, pens and pencils passed from hand to hand, and “Wink” started some one’s cap around, and the slips dropped in. Then

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Jimmy dumped the ballots on the bed, and Clem prepared to tabulate them on the back of an envelope exhumed from a pocket. Lou Stiles interrupted proceedings.

"Hold on a sec! How are we doing this? Does a majority elect or a plurality or what?"

"Plurality," decided Clem, and as no one dissented—although Leo Gosman wanted anxiously to know what a plurality was—the counting proceeded, and after a minute, Clif read the result. "Ridgway gets four," announced Clif, "Kemble ten and Tyson six. Kemble is elected. The meeting's adjourned *sine die, pro tem* and *e pluribus unum!*"

"Speech! Speech!"

"I don't know how," responded Tom, grinning. "Besides, there isn't time. But I want to say that I thank you fellows for the honor, and that I'll do my best to help you put the Fighting Scrub on the map. I don't deserve the captaincy, of course; most any of the rest of you would have been better; but I'll certainly try to deserve the—er—unexpected honor. That's all, I guess."

"Hold on," said "Babe." "Let's make it unanimous, fellows. What do you say?"

"I'll second that," declared Pat Tyson good-naturedly.

"Moved and seconded—"

"You can't! The meeting's adjourned," laughed some one.

"Forget it! Kemble is unanimously elected Captain

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of the Wyndham—no, of the Fighting Scrub, and may Heaven help him!”

To which sentiment the party laughingly dissolved, hurrying off to arm themselves for study hour.

“Well, I don’t see how it happened,” said Clif as he and Tom went back to West. “It’s great, Tom, and I’m awfully pleased, but I certainly was surprised!”

“It was a regular bolt from the blue,” agreed Tom gravely. “Look here, did you vote for me?”

“Of course I did!”

“That’s funny then.”

“What is?”

“I had eleven votes pledged and only got ten. Some lowlife went back on me!”

“You had eleven—” A light broke on Clif. “Why—why,” he sputtered at last, “you blamed old fox! Do you mean to say that you knew all the time—”

“Well, I couldn’t be sure,” Tom chuckled. “As it was, one of my pledges got away. But I sort of expected, Clif.”

“You—you politician! How’d you do it?”

“Just got them to promise to vote for me in case my name was proposed. They didn’t think it would be, of course.”

“I should say not! But how did—how’d it happen that Henning nominated you?”

“Henning thought I was the right fellow for the job,” replied Tom tranquilly.

“He did, eh? I’d like to know where he got that—”

“Some one told him, I guess.”

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"Some one! Huh! The some one was you, then, I'll bet! Say—"

But Tom was half-way up the stairs and Clif's remarks were curtailed. Turning toward Number 17, he shook his head helplessly. Then, however, he chuckled.

After study hour Clif persuaded Tom to accompany him to Mr. McKnight's. This was the evening of what "Lovey" called his "shindig." Clif had visited his adviser several times since that first conference, but had never managed to attend one of the Friday night gatherings. Tom was far from enthusiastic, but yielded to his chum's pleas. Besides, Clif accused him of duplicity and deceit, and several other dreadful things in connection with his election to the Scrub captaincy, and perhaps Tom felt that he owed Clif something in the way of apology. They found only eight others in Number 19 when they arrived; eight, that is, beside the instructor. During the next few minutes the number was augmented by the arrival of an attenuated youth with a surprisingly long neck and prominent Adam's apple, which leaped convulsively when he talked, and a Junior who was painfully embarrassed, and spent the hour voiceless in a corner.

At first the guests looked to be a motley crowd, but after a while Clif concluded that there was nothing out of the ordinary about them. They represented, he decided, the non-athletic element of the school; or, to put it more fairly, the intellectual element. Tom was plainly sorry he had come. Introductions were neces-

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sary in many cases, though some of the fellows already claimed nodding acquaintance with the two. Mr. McKnight had already learned of Tom's election and congratulated him very warmly, thereby spreading the news throughout the study. The youth with the agitated Adam's apple, whose name proved to be, appropriately enough, Baldwin, and whom Tom ever after alluded to as "The Pippin," insisted on shaking hands a second time with Tom and "felicitating" him. Baldwin modestly claimed brotherhood with Tom by reason of being somewhat athletic himself, having played last year on the Second Class Tennis Team. Whereupon Tom said: "Fine! Tennis is a great game. And I like croquet, too, Baldwin." Baldwin agreed that croquet was doubtless an interesting pastime, but you could plainly see that he resented having it placed on a level with tennis.

"Lovey" went to the piano and played something that sounded extremely difficult, and horribly mixed-up. Clif enjoyed watching his hands, though. Evidently Mr. McKnight could play well, but Clif was relieved when he broke into a popular song and, setting the example in a good baritone, persuaded most of the company to sing. There were three or four vocal selections rendered, and then "Lovey" moved a small table into the center of the big, soft rug, and served refreshments of sandwiches and cake, and lemonade. Eating appeared to loosen the tongues of the "intellectuals," and soon at least four debates were under way. Baldwin, half a sandwich poised in his right hand, a glass

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of lemonade in the other, stood before the empty grate and deplored the lack of opportunity for self-expression at Wyndham. Neither Clif nor Tom could hear him very well, but Tom stared fascinatedly at his throat, and murmured, "There it goes! Look at it! Up! Down! Up! Heck, he's swallowed it!"

But he hadn't.

Mr. McKnight sat down by Clif and talked football a while. He seemed to know a great deal about it, and presently Tom was weaned from his absorbed occupation of watching Baldwin, and took part in the talk. "Lovey" told them he hoped the Scrub would be as good this year as it had been last. "Babcock's a clever coach, fellows. He's taken some mighty unpromising material before this and turned out an excellent team." Noting Tom's grin, the instructor hastily amended. "I didn't mean to say it just that way, Kemble," he laughed. "From what I've heard and seen of his material this fall he's rather better off than usual. To my thinking Babcock would make a fine First Team coach in case Mr. Otis failed us. Of course, though, he couldn't give the time to it. Even now he's pretty hard pressed to coach you chaps."

"He's an awfully good coach, I think," agreed Clif. "He gets you to do things without telling you to, somehow. I mean, you want to please him, you know, and so you—you sort of just do things without waiting to be told!"

"That's very true, Clif," agreed Mr. McKnight. "He has always been able to win coöperation. We were

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at college together, although I knew him only slightly. He was a class ahead of me. But it was so with everything he went into there. They made him captain of the Senior eleven his last year, and he went in and won the class championship. It's like pulling teeth without gas to get a senior to come out and practice for football, but Babcock did it somehow, and they licked the sophomores first, and then tackled us after we had nosed out ahead of the freshmen. Of course we expected to beat them badly, and every one else expected us to, but Babcock worked up a cheering section with plenty of tin pans, and watchman's rattles—noise was always part of the game—and held us for the first half. I was only a substitute and didn't get into the fun until the last minute. We got a field-goal in the third quarter, and thought we had the class championship won. But along toward the last of it Babcock called for time and got his crowd together and gave instructions. They had been using only six or eight old plays, and we'd had no trouble guessing what was coming. We could see Babcock making a sort of diagram with his finger on the ground, and the others bending over and watching, and we laughed, and our crowd on the side-line made fun of them. Then they came back and spread themselves all across the field in a ridiculous sort of formation, with only two men behind the line. Of course we spread out to cover them, and played our center back, and got all set for a tricky pass. But we were all wrong. Their quarterback took the ball, and came straight through with it, and, as we were

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wide open, he had a good start with two men making interference for him before we found out what was happening. We chased him sixty-odd yards, but every time one of us thought we had him, a Senior would crowd us off, and send us tumbling, and he went over right between the goal-posts—that was in the days of the free-try for goal—and so they licked us, seven to three. Babcock has told me since that he knew the only way to beat us was to get our forward line open, and that all that instruction and diagram stuff was merely bluff. All the instruction he gave was to the quarter. ‘Take the ball,’ he said, ‘and run it straight down for a score.’ ”

CHAPTER X

CLIF GOES FOR A PAPER

THE First Team played its game away from home on Saturday, meeting Minster High School at Minster, and so, at three o'clock, the Scrub lined up against Freeburg High School on the First Team gridiron. A goodly portion of the student body had followed the school eleven, but enough fellows had remained at home to form, with a large delegation of high school boys and girls, a very respectable audience. Doctor Wyndham attended and remained until the third period was well along, and the issue had been definitely settled. Others of the faculty graced the occasion, too, and Mr. McKnight and Mr. Connover joined "Cocky" on the bench. The cold spell had passed, and the weather, clear and moderately warm, with almost no breeze, was ideal for football.

The First Team had beaten the local high school by the score of 19 to 7, and "Cocky's" charges were certain of their ability to triumph, although none predicted better than a close victory. Mr. Babcock started Adams, Ames, Howlett, Ridgway, Henning, Coles and Bingham in the line, and Jackson, Kemble, Gillespie and Thayer in the backfield. It was evident almost

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from the first that the Scrub was by far the better team, with a sturdier defense, and a harder and more varied attack. Thayer went over for the first touch-down less than six minutes after play had begun, subsequent to a straight march down the field in which the Scrub opened wide gaps in the High School line, ran the ends for good gains and pulled off one forward-pass, Kemble to Bingham. Later, the Scrub started a second advance, after an exchange of punts had gained a few yards for the home team, and had reached High School's twenty-five-yard line when the whistle blew. Scrub lost the ball on the seventeen, when play had been resumed, by Thayer's failure to find an opening. Two inches more would have won a first down. High School rushed once and then punted to Jackson in midfield and Sim scampered back sixteen yards before he was stopped. Scrub took up its journey again and pushed the ball across near the corner of the field, Kemble carrying it. Sim had missed the first try-for-point, but he succeeded this time and the Scrub had the game 13 to 0.

The half ended with no more scoring and with High School still on the defensive.

Gosman went in for Adams when the third period began, and Ike Patch took Clif's place at the other end. Later, other changes were made until "Cocky's" complete roster had seen service. Duval, who played quarter in the last period, handled the team so well that Sim Jackson looked distinctly anxious! High School threatened once in the third quarter, getting

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the ball to Scrub's twenty-one, but the home team stiffened and High School's attempt at a field-goal was knocked down by "Babe" and captured on the thirty-four yards by McMurtry. Scrub worked back to the enemy's thirty-three with two good forward-passes, a long run by Stiles, back at right half, and some good line plunging by Hoppin and Kemble. But on the thirty-three Stiles fumbled and, although he recovered the ball, Scrub was set back twelve yards. Three tries, one of them a forward-pass that grounded, gained but six yards and Tom punted over the line.

High School kept the ball from the twenty-yard line to midfield where a long forward-pass was intercepted by "Wink" Coles, and carried to the enemy's thirty-eight. "Wink" got knocked breathless in the proceeding, and time was called. Heard took his place. The quarter ended after the next play. In the last period Scrub again nearly secured a touchdown, but down on High School's twelve yards some one mixed the signals and a four-yard loss resulted. On the subsequent play Scrub was off-side and the pig-skin again went back. Finally, with five yards to go on third down, Tom tried a forward heave to Stiles that grounded behind the line. That was the final threat by either side and some fifteen minutes later the last whistle sounded, the score still 13 to 0.

Over at Minster the First had won a somewhat hollow victory to the tune of 26 to 6, and so Wyndham could crow that Saturday evening. The First Team, arriving in the dining hall practically in a body some

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fifteen minutes after supper had begun, received a salvo of hand-clapping as it made its way to the two training tables at the end of the room. The Scrub, distributed here and there about the hall, received no applause, but every member of it knew where glory really belonged! Hadn't they completely shut out a team that had scored on the First, but a fortnight ago? They had! Well, then!

Besides, if Charlie Duval hadn't called for a pass over the line that time, if he had let Kemble shoot the ball over the end, why, it was dollars to doughnuts they'd have had another score. Or if Stiles hadn't fumbled on High School's thirty-three before that—Why, any one could see that Scrub's total ought really to have been 19, at least; maybe 20; and 19 was all that the First had been able to make against High School! Then just because the First ran up a 26 to 6 score against a weak team over at Minster every one had to go crazy about it! Huh!

At Wyndham you made an arrangement with a citizen of Greek birth named—well, no one could pronounce his name in its entirety, but you called him "Poppy," which was about a quarter of the whole—for your Sunday paper. "Poppy" delivered it, along with some forty others, at the entrance. After breakfast—before if you had time—you went and got it. "Poppy," however, didn't attempt to mark each subscriber's name on his paper. He merely delivered the required assortment, and let you do your own selecting. Nine times out of ten you got a paper. Some-

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times it wasn't the one you had ordered, but it was better than none, and after you had read it you exchanged with some one else for the one you preferred. But on the Sunday morning following the Scrub's glorious victory over Freeburg High School, a victory he had talked over the evening before until his throat had become dry, Clif found only two papers left, one a Boston publication, and the other, boasting not even a colored supplement, a stingy thing from the state capital.

"I might have known I'd get left if I came down this late," mourned Clif. He had tarried upstairs to collect his laundry, and make out the list, a duty generally put off until later in the morning. He picked up the Boston paper tentatively, shook his head, and laid it down again just as its rightful owner appeared, viewing Clif with deep suspicion. There was plenty of time to go to the village if he could get permission, and he ascended the stairs again and sought Number 19. There Mr. McKnight, after politely offering Clif the use of his own *New York Times*, signed his name to a gray slip of paper and Clif started for the village.

It was quite warm this morning, much warmer than yesterday, and the sun turned the yellowing maples, and birches to pure gold. The elms along the drive were already littering the gravel with their rusty brown leaves. It was a lazy sort of a day, and Clif's steps, once he was in the fuller sunlight of Oak Street, grew slower and slower, until he was fairly dawdling along. He was still dawdling when he crossed Hubbard Street

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and passed the Inn, before which several visiting automobiles were parked. His thoughts went back to a week ago, and his father's visit, and the drive to Cotterville, and he was almost to State Street, beyond which, on the other side of Oak, "Poppy's" combined fruit, candy, and news emporium stood, when something claimed his interest, and brought his thoughts back to the present.

The something was a wheel chair which was being slowly propelled along the sidewalk by its occupant. At the distance of half a block Loring Deane was easily recognizable and Clif wondered at finding the boy alone so far from the school. Evidently he, too, had been to "Poppy's" for the sunlight shone garishly on the colored outer section of the paper in his lap. Approaching, although on the opposite side of Oak Street, Clif considered offering his assistance again. It was a long way back to school, and he didn't see how Deane could manage the curbs. But he did see a moment later, for the wheel chair came to a place where the sidewalk sloped to meet the street level at the entrance of a narrow alley, and the occupant turned his vehicle to the right, eased it down the short descent, and headed obliquely toward the State Street intersection and Clif.

"I guess I'll offer to push him back," thought Clif. "He won't mind waiting while I get my paper." He had already started to put the thought to action when an automobile came charging eastward through State Street. Involuntarily Clif drew back from the curb-

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ing. Then a motion of the arms grasping the wheel of the car sent Clif's heart into his throat. The driver was going to swing south, had already slowed slightly and was turning the steering wheel hard to the right. Squarely in the middle of the street was the wheel chair. Its occupant, unaware of the danger an instant before, now heard, and saw the car lurching around the corner scarcely forty feet away. For a moment irresolution stayed the hands on the wheels. Then, bending forward, Loring strove desperately to roll the chair to safety.

All this Clif saw ere he dashed forward. As he raced toward the boy in the chair, he was aware of the throbbing of the big automobile almost beside him, heard a spasmodic blast from the horn, and the screeching of hastily applied brakes. Then he had reached the chair and seized one arm of it, dragging it frantically toward the sidewalk. Almost simultaneously something huge and black rushed past, the wheel chair was almost wrenched from his grasp, there was a sharp report, and the metallic sound of crashing glass and silence!

Coming swiftly, the car had been unable to make the turn abruptly, and had swung well toward the left side of Oak Street. The building on the corner had obscured the driver's view of what lay ahead until he had started to turn. Then he had desperately avoided the wheel chair by swerving hard to the right, grazing the object in passing and, in spite of brakes, had swung onto the sidewalk, demolishing an iron hitch-

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ing post—perhaps Freeburg's last reminder of the Horse Age—and plunged obliquely into the front of "Poppy's" emporium! When, dazedly, Clif looked, the farther sidewalk was strewn with papers and oranges and shattered glass, and splintered boxes and "Poppy" himself, white-faced but voluble, was shaking a huge fist in the face of the scared driver.

Two minutes before it would have been difficult to count a dozen persons on the whole length of Oak Street. Now thrice that many were gathered about the scene of the accident and every instant saw the number increase. Clif's gaze dropped to Loring Deane. The latter was looking up at him questioningly. His face was pale, but he was smiling bravely enough.

"What happened?" he asked.

"Plenty," answered Clif grimly. He swung the chair around so that its occupant could see for himself. The driver of the badly damaged car had alighted, but in the rear seat two frightened women were staring strainedly about them. The town constable, stiffly attired for church, had arrived, and his thin, indignantly high-pitched voice was to be heard above the excited chatter of the throng. "You was goin' too fast! I seen you! You was goin' too fast!"

"I'm very sorry," said Loring. "It was my fault."

"No, it wasn't," Clif protested. "That man came around the corner at twenty miles an hour, easy. He was hitting thirty until he started to turn! It's a wonder he didn't get you, Deane. He's smashed the handles clean off." Clif retrieved the broken part

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from the asphalt. It didn't look to be of any further use, however, and he tossed it into the gutter.

"He was driving too fast," Loring was saying, "but I shouldn't have gone into the street alone. I told Wattles I'd stay there until he got back."

"Wattles? Is that the man who pushes you around? Well, what's become of him?"

"I don't know." Loring shook his head perplexedly. It wasn't like the faithful Wattles to remain away at such a time. "He went across to the drug store. Perhaps he's over there." Loring nodded across the street.

"I'll see if I can find him." Clif wasn't averse to seeing how the car had fared, and how badly "Poppy's" store had suffered. "I'll pull you up on the sidewalk first, though." He did so, not without difficulty, and started away. "I'll be back in a second," he called. "If I can't find him I'll push you home."

"Thanks, but he's sure to be here soon," answered Loring.

Clif had to push hard to get within viewing distance of the car since by now all Freeburg—at least, all of male Freeburg—had reached the scene. The car's driver and the constable and "Poppy" were in consultation. "Poppy" was calmer, but there was that in his handsome, brigandish countenance which told Clif that he would suffer no financial loss by reason of the accident. Underfoot Sunday papers ruffled, and golden oranges and glistening apples were being salvaged by willing hands. "Poppy's" front and side

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windows were ruins, for the heavy car had struck fairly at the angle of sidewalk and entrance. The car itself was sadly damaged, although on close inspection Clif decided that it had got off pretty well. Collision with the iron post had simultaneously demolished post, and car bumper, and the subsequent impact had crumpled in the radiator, and torn away one mudguard. Also one wheel was broken. The constable began to look for witnesses and Clif edged swiftly toward the outer rim of the throng. The missing Wattles was not to be seen. He hurried back across the street, now fairly choked by automobiles, and saw a man in a black brilliantine coat conversing with Loring Deane.

"I wonder if you'd mind pushing me back to the drugstore," said Loring as Clif joined him. "Poor old Wattles has fainted, he says."

The drug clerk assented, his gaze darting curiously across the street. "Yeah, he was just going out when the smash came, and he dropped in a heap. We got him 'round all right in a jiffy, but he's still sort of wobbly. I'll run across and see what's happened."

Wattles was a woebegone looking object when they reached the drug store. Seated decorously erect in a chair, his derby clasped fixedly on his knees, he was the color of yellow parchment and his long face was the unhappiest thing Clif had ever seen. Even when the wheel chair rolled toward him Wattles's gloom failed to lighten. He moistened his lips with an effort and:

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"You oughtn't to have done it, Mister Loring," he croaked. "You ought never to have done it. What would I have said to your father, sir, if—if—"

"Quite right," agreed Loring soothingly. "I shouldn't have done it, Wattles. How are you feeling now?"

"Better, sir, thanks. But, Mister Loring, when I looked up the street, and saw that automobile right atop of you, like, I—I had a frightful shock, sir! I really did! I just went right off!"

"Too bad, Wattles. I'm beastly sorry. Look here, you'd better not try to walk back. Bingham here will look after me. I'll see if we can't get a lift for you."

But Wattles arose superbly, even majestically—if also somewhat unsteadily—and placed his hat determinedly on his head. "Oh, no, sir, I'm quite all right now! It was merely—merely momentary, sir. The air will quite restore me, Mister Loring."

Loring looked doubtful and turned to Clif for an opinion, but Clif had been engaged in conversation by Mr. Burger, the proprietor, eager to learn about the accident, and whether any one had been injured. So Loring consented to Wattles' return afoot and, after thanking the proprietor, the three departed. Wattles' return to normal was instant when he had reached the sidewalk, and may have been due to any one of three things or a combination of all; the interesting spectacle across the street, the revivifying influence of fresh air or the shocking discovery that the handle-

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bar, by which he had so long manipulated the chair, was totally missing. Personally I think it was the latter, for Wattles seemed absolutely unable to reconcile himself to the loss of the handle, and propelled the chair in such an erratic, zig-zag fashion that Clif insisted on taking his place. Wattles, murmuring feeble, embarrassed protests, gave way and Clif became the motive power.

Fortunately public interest was so entirely centered about the battered car, and more battered store that no one paid heed to the disappearance of two of the most important witnesses to the affair. For his part, Clif had no desire to be called on to testify against the driver of the car. The latter had undeniably been at fault, but Clif was pretty certain that to-day's lesson would cure him of taking blind corners at high speed. After he had paid for "Poppy's" store, and for reckless driving, and for repairs to his car, he would be, Clif concluded, both a poorer and a wiser man. Thought of "Poppy's" emporium recalled to mind the fact that he was returning to school minus the object of his expedition, the Sunday paper, and when, just then, he discovered that what he had sought lay spread across Loring Deane's knees, on top of the ever-present dark plaid robe, he chuckled.

"I guess you'll have to lend me your paper, Deane, when you're through with it," he said. "That's what I went to the village for, but 'Poppy's' stock was pretty well shop-worn by the time I got there!"

"I'd like you to read it first," answered Loring. "In

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fact, I don't care if I don't see it at all. I get it more for Wattles than myself."

"Oh, no, thanks, but I would like to see it when you've finished. There won't be much chance for papers, anyway, before dinner, for it's pretty close to church time now."

"Well, but I'd rather you took it first," Loring insisted. "You know—you know, Bingham, you saved my life, I guess."

"Rot! You'd have made it all right even if I hadn't butted in. Well—" and this was to switch the conversation from so embarrassing a subject—"I'll take it first, if you're sure you won't mind. I'll give it back to you this afternoon. You're in that room of Mr. Clendenin's, aren't you, on the first corridor in East?"

"Yes, between his office and the game room. Doctor Wyndham let me have it because it's rather hard to get up and down the stairs so often. By the way, Wattles, you'd better see about a new chair the first thing in the morning."

Wattles, walking slightly in the rear, had, it appeared, already given thought to the subject. "I think, Mister Loring, we can rent a chair temporarily while this is being repaired. I understand there's a very capable cabinet maker in the town, sir."

"All right," laughed Loring, "but seems to me what we need is a carriage maker, Wattles. Anyhow, you see what you can do. We may have to telegraph to New York, you know."

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Clif yielded the chair to Wattles at the West Hall entrance, and, much to his confusion, since a half-dozen fellows were looking on over the tops of their papers, Loring held his hand out. Clif took it, uncomfortably aware of the curious stares of the audience, and discovered that Loring Deane, whatever his physical disabilities might be, had plenty of strength in his fingers. Loring smiled, but rather gravely, and "Thanks, Bingham," he said simply.

"Shucks, that's all right," said Clif hastily, and got his hand back feeling rather as if it had been just drawn from a vise. "I don't believe I helped much. Well, see you later. I'll bring this back by three, sure."

"Keep it as long as you want," answered Loring. "Don't return it at all unless you want to, although I hope you will because I'd like to have a visit from you."

"Why, I—sure, I'll be around."

Wattles pushed the chair on toward East Hall, and Clif, swinging the paper ostentatiously, picked his way up the steps, nodding here and there, certain that as soon as he was beyond hearing the group would join in an effort to find an explanation of that ceremonious hand shake. Going to his room Clif wished impatiently that Deane hadn't staged that silly scene out there. There'd be all sorts of crazy stories around the Hall as a result. School was a gossipy hole, anyway. But by the time he had triumphantly tossed the paper into Walter's lap he had become more len-

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ient. After all, he had helped Deane out of a pretty awkward situation, even if he hadn't actually saved the chap's life, as the silly ass insisted he had, and it was only natural that Deane should have wanted to show some gratitude. And the beggar had kept pretty steady, too, with that car bearing down on him like a—a Jug—a Jug—

"Say, Walt, what's that thing the Indian guys used to haul around so's folks could throw themselves under the wheels? You know; Jug o' nuts, or something."

"Juggernaut? That what you mean?"

"Yes, Juggernaut. I couldn't think of it. Throw me the football section, will you?"

CHAPTER XI

TOM IS BORED

CLIF didn't include his part in the action when telling Tom of the automobile accident. He had merely encountered Loring Deane in the village and returned to the school with him. Tom was inclined to be hurt because Clif hadn't asked him to go to the village, too. "Best accident of the season, and I miss it," he mourned, returning from church. "Just my luck!" After dinner he suggested a walk, but when Clif explained that he had borrowed Deane's paper, and must return it to him soon, he consented to sit on the steps in the sunshine, and peruse the comic section while Clif dug into the football news. It was after half-past three when the latter had exhausted the paper and, folding it neatly, declared his intention of restoring it to its owner. But when he bade Tom go with him, Tom refused.

"I'll wait here," said Tom. "I'm not feeling up to meeting your swell friends just now."

"But I can't just shove the paper at him and run," protested Clif. "I'll have to stay a few minutes, anyway."

"Why?" demanded Tom.

Clif couldn't explain satisfactorily without revealing the details of the morning's incident, and so he

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just said: "Gee, a fellow's got to be polite, Tom! I borrowed his paper, didn't I? Oh, come on with me, won't you?"

Tom shook his head stubbornly. "Nothing doing. Stay as long as you like. I'll take a little walk. See you later, maybe."

"I'd do as much for you."

"You won't have to. I'm not trying to break into the millionaire class."

"Oh, thunder! You make me tired! Where'll I find you in half an hour?"

"I'll be around," answered Tom vaguely. "Maybe in the village. Or over at the golf course."

"Or up in the attic or down cellar," added Clif sarcastically. "All right. See you at supper, anyway."

He knew very well that Tom was slightly jealous, but it couldn't be helped, and he went across to East with the paper. Glancing back as he went up the steps, he saw Tom meandering carelessly down the driveway, hands in pockets, and head high. Clif grinned as he went on along the corridor. "Silly old ass," he murmured affectionately.

Save that the ceiling was considerably higher than in the upstairs rooms, Loring Deane's quarters were not different from Clif's at first glance. There were two beds, two chiffoniers, and the usual number and variety of chairs. What was missing, however, were the window-seats, for here the two big windows went almost to the floor. Then, too, there was a wash stand,

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a feature lacking in the regular bedrooms. Loring was seated in an armchair close to one of the windows, and for once the almost inevitable rug was missing. Clif's gaze fell instantly from the boy's face to his legs. They looked like any other fellow's, he thought in some surprise; and then he noticed that there was something just a little awkward in the way the feet were placed. Most fellows cross their legs when at ease, but Loring's were not crossed, and the well-polished brown shoes rested flat on the rug rather as though they were somehow independent of the relaxed form in the chair. Loring saw Clif's downward glance and rightly interpreted the expression of interest on the visitor's countenance, but he only said: "Take the easy chair, Bingham. Wattles, shove it over here, will you? You needn't have bothered about the paper. Are you quite through with it?"

"Yes, thanks." Clif was resolutely keeping his eyes away from his host. "You look pretty comfortable here, Deane."

"Yes, the room is really very nice. We could do with a little more space, but we're not suffering. Help yourself to the paper, Wattles. Wattles, you see, Bingham, is always restless until he gets the paper and learns the football scores."

"Really?" Clif looked across at the man with some surprise. "So you're a football bug—er—Wattles."

"Oh, it isn't our game he's interested in," Loring laughed. "What he wants to read is that the Stoke

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Pogis Hotspurs won from the Lancashire Argonauts or the Welsh Terriers beat the Bermin'am Brindles."

"Oh, I see," said Clif. "Over in England, eh?"

"Yes, sir," replied Wattles gravely. "It's the game I know best, Mr. Bingham."

"Don't you like our game?"

"Oh, yes, sir, it's most interesting, but I don't understand it so very well yet. It seems just a bit confusing to the—the layman, sir."

Loring chuckled, and Clif, smiling, said: "Oh, but you'll soon get the hang of it, Wattles, and be cheering your head off for us."

"Very likely, sir, and I'm sure I hope you will be successful, Mr. Bingham. I have been giving a great deal of attention and study to the game, but—" and here Wattles smiled reproachfully—"Mister Loring isn't much help, sir."

Clif looked inquiringly at Loring. Loring was instantly indignant. "Why, how you talk, Wattles! I've explained and explained to you, you thankless beggar!"

Wattles's discreet smile appeared again. "Yes, Mister Loring, you have, but recently when I asked you why one of the young gentlemen stayed so far away from the scrum—"

"Scrimmage, Wattles."

"Yes, sir, scrimmage. Well, sir, you said he was an extra man and wasn't allowed to take part until one of the others was injured, but I observed that very shortly afterwards he tackled the young gentleman who was

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running with the ball, and I knew you were just having your joke, sir.”

Clif had to laugh when Loring did, although he tried not to for fear of wounding Wattles’s feelings. “Oh, well,” said Loring, “I was kidding you that time, Wattles, but usually you may rely implicitly on what I tell you.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Wattles, dryly but respectfully, “but I can’t always say when you’re spoofin’—I should say kidding, sir!”

The two boys exchanged amused glances as Wattles retired to the other side of the room with the paper. There was a low table near Loring’s chair, and on it, amongst other things, was a folding chess-board and an oblong box. Clif nodded toward it. “That’s a chess-board, isn’t it? You ought to get Tom Kemble to give you a game. He’s rather a shark at chess.”

“Then you’re not? Kemble’s the fellow I see you with so often, isn’t he?”

“Yes. Tom says I haven’t enough brains for chess. Maybe that’s it. Anyhow, I’m absolutely punk.”

“I’d like to play with you some time,” said Loring. “Wattles is getting so he can beat me now, and I don’t care about being licked every time. It’s too monotonous. How are you at checkers?”

“Oh, I play a little, but I’m not much better than at chess. I can’t get interested enough, I guess.”

“Football’s your one and only love, then,” smiled Loring.

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“Well, I do like football, but I play baseball, too. You’re something of a football fan yourself, I guess. I see you around most every afternoon.”

“Yes, I am. I like to watch. And”—Loring smiled faint apology—“I like to imagine myself playing, Bingham. I like to make believe that if I had a good pair of legs I’d be a wonderful football player. It’s rather fun sometimes, pretending.”

Clif refrained from looking at the other’s legs with difficulty and stammered: “Yes, it is. And—and I dare say you’d be pretty good, too, if you—if you could.”

“Thanks,” laughed Loring. “You’re a gentleman, Bingham! I’ve said the same thing to Wattles a dozen times and the best I’ve ever got from him was, ‘Oh, very likely, sir.’ ” There was a protesting sniff from across the room. “Anyway, Bingham, I know football, even if I can’t play it. I’ve got about every book that’s ever been written on it.” He nodded toward a bookcase behind Clif and the latter turned and looked. Loring had not exaggerated. There was nearly a shelf of them.

“Gee!” muttered Clif. “I didn’t know there were half that many in the world. I’ve never read one of them!”

“You don’t need to. You get your knowledge first-hand.”

“Are they—interesting?” asked Clif.

“They are to me. I dare say it sounds conceited, but it’s really a fact that I know more football than most

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of those fellows on the First Team. I see that by watching them. More than half the time they do things without knowing why. One of those chaps there"—Loring nodded again toward the bookcase—"says that he doesn't want the men he is coaching to know too much football; that he'd rather teach each one only what he can use in playing his position. He may be right, but I don't think so. I don't believe a thorough knowledge of the game is going to hurt any player. Of course the best way to get that knowledge is by experience, by starting as a little chap and learning as you go along; but lots of fellows never learn more than enough to hold down their positions by the skin of their teeth. If I was a coach I'd make my men read and study one of those books until they really knew what it was all about!"

"Gee, that's an idea," said Clif.

Loring laughed. "I can tell by the way you say that that you think I'm a perfect nut, Bingham. It does sound cheeky for a chap who can't take a step without being held up to tell a real player—"

"I wasn't thinking anything of the sort," protested Clif warmly. "I think it's rather wonderful you're so—so clever about it. I should think not being able to play would sort of—sort of sour you on football. I say, why don't you coach one of the class teams? Couldn't you do it?"

"From a wheel chair? I'm afraid not. Anyhow, I dare say my knowledge of football isn't more than half practical. It's just 'book learning,' Bingham. I get a

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good deal of fun out of it, though.” Loring chuckled. “I’m an absolute nut about plays. Making them up, I mean. I’ve got—” He broke off to address Wattles. “Get me that portfolio, will you, Wattles? The one with the football diagrams in it. That’s it. Thanks. Have a look, Bingham. There’s where a lot of my time has gone. If you laugh I’ll throw the chessmen at you!”

The portfolio was slightly larger than the sheet after sheet of letter-size bond paper inside and was closed with three knotted tapes. Each sheet held a diagram, sometimes two, and accompanying text, and Clif, turning over one after another, marveled at the neatness of the penned figures and lines and letters. Loring had used two colors of India ink in each case, showing the attacking team in black circles and the defending side in red. Straight lines were straight and curved lines were firm and graceful. The letters and figures were remarkable, and for a moment Clif thought that Loring was hoaxing him, that he was looking at printed diagrams. “Tandem Outside Guard,” he read. “Forward-Pass from Reverse Play (8),” “Forward-Pass from End Run Threat,” “Delayed Pass from Kick Formation.”

Clif looked across at Loring admiringly.

“Say, but these are corking! Do you think—I mean—”

“Will they go? Yes, I know they will. Of course a lot of them aren’t new. I mean by that, Bingham, they were new to me when I doped them out, but of

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course other fellows had thought of the same thing, or something like it. You can't invent a new football play very often; a radically new one, I mean. The best you can do is work out some better way of making an old one. Now and then, though, they change the rules a bit and you get a new line of thought. This year the forward-pass offers a chap the best chance for hitting on new stuff. There's one play there—just let me see it a minute, will you? Yes, here it is. I'd like to see that tried some time. It's a fake run around the short side with the ball going from fullback to end, who has come around behind, and then on a forward-pass over the long side to the other end. And here's another one that I really think could be worked nicely under the proper conditions."

Clif had pulled his chair beside Loring's. His praise of the diagrams had been genuine, but his admiration was rather for the skill shown in their drawing than for their practical value, for the science of football strategy had never engaged his interest. Loring turned the sheets forward until he came to the one he sought. "Now, this, you see, is a scoring play, pure and simple. It depends first of all on a quarterback who can carry the ball and is fast."

Clif nodded, leaning over to stare fascinatedly at the red and black circles and squares, the straight lines and curved lines and dotted lines, the letters and figures and arrow-heads. He was beginning at last to translate the symbols into panting, crouching players and follow in imagination the flight of the ball along its wavy

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path. "It's a quarterback run, isn't it?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes," said Loring. "But the 'kick' in this play, Bingham, depends on keeping the ball hidden. Now, say we're on the fifteen-yard line—"

In the village at that moment Tom emerged from Burger's drug store after his second glass of orange-squiz. He hadn't particularly wanted that second drink. He hadn't, for that matter, particularly wanted the first, but a fellow had to do something. He looked again along the almost empty sidewalk in the direction of the school, but Clif still failed to materialize. Tom scowled, dug his hands deeper into the pockets of his trousers, rattled some loose silver and pennies, and turned for the fourth time to a bored survey of the left-hand window. Six dozen wrapped bottles of "Buckingham's Liquid Elixir, the Century's Greatest Scientific Discovery" made a pinkly geometrical display in the background, while in the foreground numerous boxes, alternately covered and uncovered, of "Tannebaum's Oil of Amber Soap" added a harmonizing tone of pale yellow. Tom scowled harder than ever and turned toward the more varied offer of the second window. But even this soon palled on fourth acquaintance, and finally he gave it up and set his steps toward school, murmuring a dejected "Heck!" as he set forth.

CHAPTER XII

DEFEAT

MONDAY was an easy day for both First Team and Scrub, but on Tuesday the hard grind began again. "Cocky" never let a session go by without trotting his squad over to the tackling dummy, and Clif, for one, had grown to hate that limp and headless object with an almost passionate intensity. Perhaps this was largely because his tackling was not of the best and didn't seem to improve with practice. Mr. Babcock frequently told him that he would never become a really good end until he could make his tackles surer. Secretly, though, Clif considered that he did as well as Jeff Adams, who had asserted his right to the left end position, and a heap better than a lot of the others. He wished he might convince Mr. Babcock of it!

The field was a busy place now, for the third gridiron was in use by the class teams, and from around the corner of East Hall floated frantic shouts and commanding bellows and the thud of booted balls. Practice over there was intensive, for, since there were four squads and but one gridiron, they worked two teams at a time, limiting that time to an hour.

On Monday the Scrub was enlarged by the addition of Joe Craigie, a guard candidate released by Coach

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Otis. The First was getting its stride now, and most of the positions were settled on. The impression that this was to be another winning year was gaining ground daily, for the team was ahead of the season in development and coming steadily. Mr. Otis, switching from last year tactics, was building his attack around Fargo. Last season, playing very modern football indeed, Wyndham had been beaten; although the defeat was attributable to the renowned Grosfawk rather than to Wyndham's offense. A coach must build his game about his material, and "G. G.'s" principal assets this year were a powerful fullback who was seldom stopped without some gain and a flashy halfback, Jensen, who had a positive genius for finding fissures in the enemy line and making chasms of them. So, while the passing and running games were not neglected, it was the old, reliable line-bucking style of play that the Head Coach was teaching the First. And this meant that the Scrub had to stand some tough onslaughts those days. It was lucky for the Second that its line held such weighty, non-breakable veterans as Clem Henning and "Babe" and "Wink" and Al Greene and Jimmy Ames, for a lighter or less experienced lot of forwards would never have stood the strain. When "Big Bill" Fargo smashed in, you knew without being told or reading about it that something had happened!

Mr. Otis had sought to provide a strong, heavy line, sacrificing something of speed in the effort, and Raiford and Higgs and Quinlan, early season probabilities, had been put aside in favor of sturdier men.

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Billy Desmond seemed sure of right guard position, Carlson was in center in place of Higgs, and Weldon had ousted Raiford at right tackle. It was only at the end positions that "G. G." placed speed above brawn, and Archer and Drayton were first choices there. Stoddard still had a perceptible edge on Houston at quarter, while Whitemill and Sproule were fighting for left half back's place.

On Thursday the Scrub was instructed to use one forward-pass in every three plays in order that the First might work up a better defense before meeting Horner Academy on Saturday. Clif, who had shown fair ability as a receiver of thrown balls, came through with only an ensanguined nose, a strained wrist and a few minor abrasions, and considered himself lucky. He accused Tom of trying to kill him off by putting him into almost every forward-pass, but he was really very much tickled. One of the passes gave Clif a seventeen-yard run and led to the only score made by the Scrub that week. But most of the attempts to gain by the aerial route failed, for Coach Otis had worked out a very satisfactory defense and it was difficult for Tom and Sim to find an eligible and uncovered man to throw to. Although the Scrub was given the ball many times when she hadn't earned it, the First held it some of the time and didn't have very much trouble in making two touchdowns and a like number of field-goals. Friday saw another hard session and then, on Saturday, Nemesis in the shape of some twenty-five husky youths with blue-and-brown-striped stockings came

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along and upset calculations horribly. Horner came from a long way off, but a hard railway journey had not hurt them a bit, it seemed.

Wyndham scored first, in the second quarter, when, held firmly on Horner's nineteen yards, Stoddard kicked a goal from the twenty-eight. But that was the last of such performances, for after that the game was all Horner. The Blue-and-Brown took the ball on its forty-two when the third quarter arrived and rushed it straight down to Wyndham's twenty-six, using off-tackle and round the end plays varied with one forward-pass that was good for eight yards. Wyndham held for two downs and then succumbed before a tricky play that should have been either a kick or a pass and was a quick quarterback plunge at center that landed the ball just short of the required distance. A wedge on the left of the dark blue line made it first down, and from the fifteen Horner took the ball over in six plays, battering at Desmond and Weldon until the right of the Wyndham line finally crumpled and the last charge yielded four long yards and a touch-down.

"G. G." replaced Desmond with Smythe and, still later, sent half a dozen other substitutes dribbling in. But Horner couldn't be seriously dented between tackles, and although, as a final desperate enterprise, "G. G." sent Sproule in for Whitemill with instructions to round the ends, Wyndham came no nearer another score than the enemy's thirty-two yards, from where, well along in the fourth quarter, "Big Bill"

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made a desperate and well-nigh hopeless try for a goal from placement. The ball came down near the five-yard line. Horner was still not through, and in the last six minutes of the twelve-minute period, she added insult to injury by plowing her way from midfield, where she had taken a short punt, to the seventeen yards and, when stubbornly held there, shooting a forward toss over the middle of the line for another score. As a doughty fullback kicked an easy goal after each touchdown the final humiliating score was 14 to 3.

Well, a team can't always win, and Wyndham had feared Horner beforehand. Unfortunately, though, she hadn't feared her enough. Wyndham's defense against the forward-pass, which had worked nicely when opposed to her Scrub, had failed badly. Horner had tried the air three times and each time had succeeded. Her style of passing was, however, different from the Scrub's, and the First had failed to solve it. Evidently, then, there was still much to be learned as to protection against the passing game. Even Coach Otis's big line of forwards hadn't gained much glory. More than one Horner plunge had torn it wide apart, while the enemy's persistent attack on Desmond and Weldon had shown conclusively that the right side needed something at present lacking. Wyndham's ends had been boxed time after time, and even "Big Bill," the pride and boast of the School, had fallen down badly on the defense. Altogether, then, the coaches had much to ruminate on that Saturday evening. Es-

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pecially as Horner Academy then rated about 60 to Wolcott's 100!

But other things besides football games and practicings occurred during that week preceding Wyndham's first defeat. For instance, there was a stupendous chess combat between Loring and Tom. That took place on Wednesday evening. Clif had almost despaired of inducing Tom to visit Loring. Tom was studiously indifferent on Sunday and Monday, agreeing with his chum that it was extremely likely that Loring Deane could beat him at chess. Tom stated humbly that he really wasn't much of a player. Clif contradicted the assertion indignantly, almost spoiling his conspiracy by declaring that maybe Tom could lick Loring after all. On Tuesday, having recovered from an attack of jealousy, Tom said that a fellow who didn't have much else to do but play chess ought to be pretty good at it. On Wednesday he capitulated and followed Clif over to East Hall when supper was over. No one could well help being attracted to Loring, and Tom forgot his prejudice instantly. Soon they were seated with the chess-board between them and the game was on. Clif watched, at first with interest, then, as time passed, merely for want of other occupation. Wattles was not present. After serving Loring's supper—Loring had all his meals in his room—he was free until half-past nine, at which time he returned to get the boy to bed. Sometimes Wattles went to the village and attended the moving pictures, but more frequently he was to be found in the library

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or reading room in West Hall. Clif wished he were present. Talking to Wattles would be far more amusing than watching the interminable game.

When, finally, Loring won, Clif got the impression that the host would have preferred to lose. Loring was almost apologetic and found numerous excuses for Tom. Tom, however, was a good loser, and he refused to take refuge behind the excuses. "Heck," he said, "you just played better chess, Deane. Where I made my mistake—"

And then they played the whole thing all over again, and had scarcely more than finished when the gong warned of study hour!

The next evening Tom hurried through his supper and was almost impatient with Clif because the latter, in spite of many honorable wounds received in battle that afternoon, was hungry and insisted on satisfying his appetite. When they got to Loring's room that youth was still eating, and Tom had to wait a good ten minutes while Loring finished and Wattles removed the tray and the small table was placed close to Loring's chair. Then another battle began, and Clif selected one of the books on football and fairly turned his back on the game. This time, though, the contest was soon over, for Loring made a fatal mistake soon after the start. As there was scarcely time for another, the chessmen were put away, Clif returned the book he had been reading to the shelf and they talked. Presently Tom asked to see the collection of football diagrams of which Clif had told him and the rest of the time was

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spent in discussing them. Tom was loud in his praise of them, but he thought some of them not workable, and that led to a three-cornered discussion during which the chess-board was again produced and several plays were rehearsed. Tom proved his contention with regard to one of them and Loring cheerfully crumpled a sheet of paper up and tossed it into the waste-basket. Going back to West, Tom confided to his companion that Loring Deane knew a lot of football and that it was a plaguey shame he couldn't get out and play like other fellows.

By the last of that week going over to Loring's after supper had become a habit with Clif and Tom, and by Saturday evening the intimacy had reached the point where the chums were calling Loring by his first name and Loring was saying "Tom" and "Clif" quite naturally. Discussion of the First Team's defeat by Horner delayed the chess game that evening, to Clif's delight, and the subject was well thrashed out between them before the board was set out on the little table. In an argument between Tom and Loring on the subject of Stoddard's choice of plays, Loring, in Clif's opinion, won conclusively.

"Well, maybe he made mistakes," Tom conceded at last, "but he's better than Houston, isn't he?"

"I think so," answered Loring, "but neither of them is my idea of a corking quarter. But then, I'm not keen on their style, anyway."

"How do you mean, Loring?" Clif asked.

"I mean that if I were a football coach I wouldn't

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ask my quarterback to carry the ball much. Football's a lot like war, Clif. The coach is the commander-in-chief who lays out the plan of the battle. The quarterback is the general who carries out his orders. But the coach can't plan in detail because there's no way to know beforehand what situations will arise. That's where the quarter is called on for generalship. There's no chance to confer with the coach. He's got to size up each situation as it arrives and decide what to do. It's up to him to move his forces so as to win. I've never played quarterback, but I think I know pretty well what a quarter's up against. He's got to consider a lot of things, such as the situation of the ball in regard to the goals and the side lines, the number of the down, the distance to be gained, the strength and weakness of the enemy, the ability and condition of his backs, a dozen more things. And he's got to reach a decision in mighty short time usually. Well, now I think all that's quite enough to saddle one fellow with when his side is on the offensive. He's got enough to do without being called on to carry the ball, and if he was my quarter he wouldn't be asked to get into the interference too often. If he could run the team I wouldn't care whether he ever gained a foot of ground himself. Just knowing what plays to call and calling them correctly and keeping his team fighting every minute—why, I'd forgive him even if he wasn't a wonder on defense. He could fumble a punt now and then and I'd still call him a corking quarter!"

"Yes, that's so," said Tom. "Still, lots of fellows

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can run the team and carry the ball, too. Some of the finest quarterbacks have been all-around men."

"I know, but they aren't so numerous, Tom. The average fellow, especially if he is prep school age, can't do a lot of things at once and do them all well. Any quarter, I don't care who he is, will be of more value to his team if he just has to run it and isn't expected to carry the ball himself."

"Well, I don't know," said Tom doubtfully. "If he's a cracker-jack runner and hard to stop—"

"Make him a halfback then and find another quarter," said Loring.

"Yes, but he might have ability to run the team, too," objected Tom. "No, I don't believe I agree with you, Loring. I've seen some mighty good quarters who could do both things."

"I'm not saying there haven't been some or won't be more," replied Loring pleasantly. "But they're the exceptions. A fellow only has one brain and it will hold only so much. When he tries to get too much into it he crowds it. If he has too much on his mind he's bound to trip up now and then, and now and then is far too often. To-day Stoddard wouldn't have made three or four glaring mistakes in judgment if he'd had only the running of the team to think about. I've never played the game, Tom, but you can't make me believe that a fellow, the average fellow, anyhow, can take the ball, run thirty yards with it, dodging three or four tacklers, be thrown hard and sat on and then

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get up with a clear head and know almost instantly what the next play ought to be!"

"He surely can't," agreed Clif. "I think you're dead right, Loring."

"Heck, might as well let the quarter sit on the bench alongside the coach, then," grumbled Tom. "Nothing to do but call his signals!"

"Why not do away with the quarter entirely?" asked Loring, laughing. "Let the coach run the team from the side-line by radio!"

"Fine," applauded Clif. "Then, if he lost his game, he could blame it on static!"

"Well, we've got a quarter who knows both branches of his trade pretty well," said Clif. "Sim's a mighty fine player, I think."

"That's Jackson?" asked Loring. "He's the dark-haired chap, isn't he? Well, have you ever noticed how seldom he takes the ball himself?"

Tom blinked. "I guess we haven't got many plays for quarterback," he answered. Then he caught an amused twinkle in Loring's eyes. "Oh, come on and let's play," he laughed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONSULTING COACH

CLIF'S father was to have visited him Sunday, but the morning brought a telegram stating that a sudden journey to Boston necessitated a postponement of the Freeburg trip to the following Sunday. Clif's disappointment was not lasting. In the afternoon he and Tom and Loring went for a walk. That is, he and Tom walked and took turns pushing Loring's chair, long since mended by the local carpenter. Wattles was left behind, delighted by the prospect of two hours of browsing in the school library but uneasy at intrusting his charge to the two boys.

The day was fair and, for the latter part of October in that region, quite warm. Along Oak Street many of the residents were on their porches, and the sight of the boy in the wheel chair created much interest and curiosity. Clif was conscious of the craning necks and low-voiced comments, but Loring seemed not to be aware of them. Perhaps, Clif thought, you got used to that sort of thing after a while. They went through the village and then westward and came to a halt at last beside the little river where the end of the old covered bridge offered a sheltered, sunny nook. Clif and Tom climbed to the top of a fence. Loring, sup-

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plied with a willow wand at his request, trimmed it with his knife and whittled contentedly while conversation roamed from one subject to another. They were on a little-traveled road and the only vehicle to rattle across the bridge during their sojourn was an old buggy drawn by a fat gray horse and occupied by a roly-poly old man who gave them a cheerful "Afternoon, boys," and painstakingly forbore to stare at Loring. Loring's gaze followed the retreating figure and he smiled.

"He wanted so much to take a good look, too," said Loring. "Nice old codger. I almost wanted to tell him I didn't mind."

"I guess you're pretty used to it," Tom mused. "Say, how long have you been this way?"

Clif looked startled, but Loring only smiled as he answered: "Sixteen years and seven months, Tom."

"Six—you mean *always*?"

"Ever since I was born."

"Gosh! Can't they do anything? What's it like?"

Clif thought the questions in rather poor taste and looked apologetic on his friend's behalf, but Loring didn't appear to mind. "They haven't done much yet," he answered. "I've been treated by a lot of doctors, here and abroad, but nothing much has come of it. My leg bones don't pick out the right food to grow on, it seems. They're too fond of lime. Calcification the doctors call it. That and a lot of other things. Usually each one has his own pet name for it. Anyway, there's too much chalk in those bones

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down there, and if I ever got mad with you, Tom, and kicked you, you'd have the laugh on me because I'd break my leg. They're so brittle they're no use at all as legs. Sometimes I think it would be better to get rid of them and save the price of shoes and stockings, but no one else seems to. The doctor father is supporting now makes believe I'll be able to use the silly things some day; says that as I get older the bone structure will get more sense. I don't know, though."

"But don't you do anything for it?" asked Clif.

"Oh, yes, I'm on a funny diet, for one thing. You'd be surprised, fellows, to know what perfectly innocent looking things contain lime! And this doctor's working on the theory that if I don't give the bones enough lime to suit them they'll get discouraged and use something else. Then poor old Wattles has to take me to walk every morning and night."

"Take you to walk!" exclaimed Tom incredulously.

"That's what he calls it," laughed Loring. "We're doing an eighth of a mile now twice a day; a two-twenty-yard dash, you know! You see, they won't let me use my legs myself, so Wattles does it for me. He massages the pesky things and works all the joints—as carefully as if they were made of glass—and has a jolly good time of it. Wattles is really a brick. He had to put in a week or more at the hospital and take a course of instruction before he could get the job, and I believe he honestly thinks now that he's an authority on bone diseases. He's a conscientious chap, too, and

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if the house caught on fire while he was 'exercising' me I'll bet he wouldn't get out until I'd had my full thirty minutes!"

"But couldn't you use crutches?" asked Tom.

"Yes, but they won't let me do it. Too much chance of an accident, they say. I'm not even allowed to cross my legs! Not that I'm at all sure I could do it, for it's so long since I tried that I honestly believe I've forgotten how." He turned to smile at Clif. "That was a pretty close call the other day, you know. I dare say that if that car had dumped me out of the chair Wattles would have had to sweep my legs up into a dustpan!"

"What was that?" demanded Tom. "I didn't hear about it."

"Didn't Clif tell you?" asked Loring. Then he laughed. "Sorry, Clif. I thought he knew."

"He does know. That is, I told him all he needed to know," muttered Clif.

"You never did! Whatever it is, you didn't say a word about it."

"Didn't I tell you about meeting Loring in the village last Sunday? Well, then!"

"Sure, but you didn't say anything about Loring being dumped out of his chair!"

"He wasn't dumped out of his chair. All that happened—"

"Better let me tell it," said Loring.

"Go ahead," answered Clif. "There's nothing to tell, anyway. You were coming across the street—"

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“Shut up!” Tom commanded sternly. “No one wants to hear from you. Go ahead, Loring.”

So Loring went ahead and gave a perfectly truthful and not at all sensational account of the affair, and Tom viewed Clif accusingly during the narrative and, when it was finished, exclaimed disgustedly: “Of all the tight mouthed, secretive vipers! Loring, I’ve watched over that guy ever since he came here. I was the first one to befriend him. Without me, he—he wouldn’t be anywhere to-day. And look at the way he repays me! Goes out and makes a silly hero of himself saving people from being trampled underfoot by rampageous automobiles and never says a word about it! And he calls that friendship, I suppose!”

“You make me tired, both of you,” grumbled Clif. “There wasn’t much danger, anyway, and all I did was give a yank to the chair. The fellow in the car would have missed him even if I hadn’t touched it. And if you go and tell this to any one else, Tom, I’ll make you wish you hadn’t!”

“Oh, shut up,” said Tom good-naturedly. “You might have known I wouldn’t spill it, Clif. Next time you come right home, like a good little boy, and tell daddy all about it.”

“There won’t be any next time,” answered Clif emphatically.

“Not with me,” chuckled Loring. “Wattles will never give me another chance to congest traffic. The poor chap had nightmare so badly that night that I had to wake him up twice!”

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"It's a wonder he let you go without him to-day," marveled Clif.

"I was surprised myself," agreed Loring. "I more than half expected to find him tagging along behind, keeping a watchful eye on me. You don't happen to see a black derby sticking up behind a bush anywhere, do you?"

Going back, Tom, trundling the chair, broke a silence of several minutes with: "Look here, Loring, I wish you'd do something for me. I mean for us, for the Scrub Team."

"I will if I can. What is it?"

"Well, you've been looking on at practice and scrimmage almost every day, and you know a lot about football and how it ought to be played, and I've been thinking that a fellow on the side-line sees a good deal that gets by those on the field."

"Well—"

"Now what I'd like you to do is this. You watch how things go; watch the fellows play; size up the whole performance, you know, and then you tell me afterwards what's wrong. Of course the Scrub's just the Scrub, but I'm captain of it and I'd like to see the old outfit make a good showing. You've got some pretty good ideas about the game, Loring, and I guess if you sort of kept an eye on us and then we had a talk afterwards, why—"

"That's the most sensible remark you ever got off," said Clif. "I call that a corking good idea!"

"I'll be glad to try," said Loring. "I'd like to im-

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mensely, fellows, but, after all, my football's just what you might call theory, and it seems rather cheeky for a chap who has never played a lick to—to set up as a critic!"

"No, it doesn't," answered Tom firmly. "Critics are always like that. The good ones, I mean. I don't have to be a baker to know when a pie is punk! You just watch us play, Loring, and see where we fall down. I'm not throwing off on 'Cocky.' He's a dandy coach. But he isn't on the outside looking in, and he's got a lot of stuff to think about all at once. Things might easily get by him—little things especially—just because he's right on top of the play. Then there's strategy, too. There's a whole lot in that, Loring, and you've sort of studied that end of it. So, if it wouldn't be too much of a bother, I wish you'd help us out, Loring."

"Of course I will! Why, it'll be a lot of fun for me, Tom. Almost like playing football myself!"

"Done! Here, you push awhile, you lazy beggar!"

"Lazy yourself," answered Clif as he took the other's place. "I should think, though, you'd be glad to keep the job, Tom. It isn't every day you get the chance to be chauffeur to the consulting coach!"

After they had consigned Loring to the care of a relieved Wattles and were returning to West, Clif said: "How did you happen to think of that scheme, Tom? I'll bet he can give us some mighty good tips, eh?"

"Oh, well; it can't do us any harm, I guess."

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“Any harm?”

Tom turned on his companion a look of mild perplexity. “For goodness’ sake, Clif,” he replied, “you don’t suppose I really meant all that guff!”

“What did you say it for, then?” asked Clif indignantly.

“Because,” Tom answered equably, “I wanted to give the poor chap a little more interest in life. Didn’t you see how pleased he was? Why, as he said, it will be almost like playing the game himself. I like that chap, old son, and I want to do anything I can to—to—”

“Oh, you do? Then why try to make a fool of him? Don’t you suppose he will find out quick enough that you don’t really want his advice?”

“No, why should he? And I haven’t said I didn’t want his advice. Of course I want it if it’s any good. I just don’t suppose it will be, that’s all. The big thing is to give him a better time here, don’t you see?”

“Yes,” answered Clif dubiously, “but, just the same, it seems sort of mean to fool him, Tom.”

“I’m not fooling him until he finds it out,” replied the other philosophically, “and he never will find it out unless you tell him.”

“I’d be likely to,” jeered Clif.

“Exactly. So that’s that. See you at supper, old timer.”

Coach Otis made several shifts in the First Team on Monday and it was late when the Scrub was called over. During one fifteen-minute session the First scored two

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touchdowns, Whitemill making the first on a long run from midfield and Fargo going over for the second from the Scrub's seven-yards. Tom's team was on the defensive most of the time and, if truth must be told, played rather raggedly. On the First, Billy Desmond was displaced by Quinlan, and Couch and Williams held the ends. The First, nettled by Saturday's defeat, played savage ball. Jimmy Ames, in tackling Jensen soon after the trouble started, sustained a bad wrench of his left knee and was out for the day and for many more days to follow. Clem Henning retired early, too, after some zealous First Team man had put his knee into him, but Clem's injury was only temporary. On the whole, the Scrub got pretty well battered up during that brief session, and minor injuries were numerous.

That afternoon Loring watched the Scrub during its practice and then followed it across to the First Team field, and after supper, when Clif and Tom dropped in on him he was well primed with criticism. But the faults Loring had discovered were already known to coach and captain, and while Tom treated Loring's disclosures with the utmost respect Clif knew quite well that he was not taking them seriously. Loring pointed out that several of the Scrub linemen were slow in starting, that "Wink" Coles played too high, that Stiles had a bad habit of slowing up before reaching the line and that Clif Bingham had missed two tackles! Loring also criticized Jackson for attempting a forward-pass on fourth down on his own thirty-eight

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yards, which attempt resulted in an interception by the First and brought about the latter's second touch-down. Tom declared that he was glad to get the tips and that he would pass them on to "Cocky."

"Of course some of it won't be news to him, though. He's been trying to speed up the forwards right along, for instance; and that stuff about Clif is old, too. He does miss too many tackles, and that's no joke."

"I don't see why, either," Clif complained. "I try hard enough."

"I thought to-day that you tried *too* hard," said Loring. "That time you tried for Whitemill, Clif, you weren't near enough when you grabbed, and you got only one hand on him. It's possible that you're too anxious, isn't it? Hadn't you better try getting closer to your man before tackling?"

"Maybe that's it," said Clif, glumly. "There's something wrong. 'Cocky' has told me all along that I'm a punk tackler, and I guess I am."

"Oh, you're not as bad as that," said Tom. "There are others!"

"Of course I didn't think that I was telling you news," said Loring. "You asked me to tell you what I saw, Tom, and that's what I've done. I still say that it's cheeky of me to set up as a football authority and critic, you know!"

"I don't see it," Tom answered. "You certainly got the dope on us to-day, didn't you? You keep up the good work, old son. Unless we do a heap better than we did to-day we're going to need all the help we can get!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIGHTING SCRUB

TUESDAY found the Fighting Scrub putting up a better defense, even though McMurtry, in Ames's place, proved a weak point in the line. Later Joe Craigie, a substitute guard, ousted McMurtry and the left side of the Scrub line got back to normal. In the first period of the practice game "Big Bill" banged through for a touchdown and Stoddard kicked the goal, while the best the Scrub could do was repeatedly kick out of danger. In the second go, however, with Fargo out of it and "Swede" Hanbury in his position, the Scrub not only held the enemy scoreless but earned two points when Houston, at quarter, touched the ball down for a safety rather than have a touchdown scored. The Scrub put up a hard fight toward the end and Captain Tom had the ball on the adversary's twelve yards when the whistle blew.

On Wednesday it became known that Quinlan, of the First, was in trouble at the Office and might not get reinstated in time to do much more playing. Quinlan was only a second-string guard, but he was a good man and his loss was no light matter. "G. G." reached out and grabbed Clem Henning away from the Scrub,

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and the wails of that aggregation were loud and heart-rending. As Tom pointed out, and as most of the others acknowledged, it was luck for Clem, and for his sake they were glad enough, but his loss left a gaping hole in the Scrub line that Joe Craigie couldn't wholly fill. After two days of experimenting, Coach Babcock put Joe back at left tackle and gave the right guard position to Howlett. Howlett was light, but he had plenty of fight, and in time he learned his duties very well. But during the rest of that week the disrupted Scrub took some fine wallopings from the First and got but one score. That single bit of glory belonged about evenly to Clif and Johnny Thayer. It was Clif who pulled down Jackson's long heave across the left of the line and ran it through a thickly populated alien territory to the four yards where he was tackled from behind by Duval. If Clif was still weak at making tackles he was certainly strong at avoiding them, for no fewer than four of the First at one time or another laid hands on him. Clif had a way of spinning out of delaying clutches that was very pretty indeed! From the four yards, Johnny Thayer, at fullback, took the ball across in one straight plunge on Cotter. Sim Jackson fumbled the pass and there was no goal.

Clif and Johnny were metaphorically presented with the Key of the City by their grateful team mates on Friday night. That score had been sorely needed to prop up the Scrub's declining self-respect, and so those who had provided it were momentary heroes. Tom

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didn't stop lavishing praise on Clif all the evening, and he was ably abetted by Loring. Tom was inclined to lose track of the fact that the First Team was in all ways a superior organization and to lay every detail to the Scrub's shortcomings rather than to the adversary's fuller knowledge and better playing. It was hard to make him see why the Scrub didn't have an even chance at every game. Tom was making a very good captain, although, as frequently happens, being captain had slowed up his progress as a player. Not that Tom wasn't still holding down the left halfback position in good shape, for he was. He was a more certain gainer through the line than Lou Stiles, was a better punter than any one on the First except "Big Bill" Fargo and could get a forward-pass off in fine style. It was just that his anxiety to have the Scrub a great team caused him to give more thought to its development than to the individual duties of Tom Kemble, with the result that Tom's progress was not quite keeping up with that of the others. Tom was far from realizing this, although Mr. Babcock, who played no favorites, was after Tom a good deal during practice. Doubtless if Tom hadn't had so many things on his mind it would have dawned on him that his playing wasn't meeting with "Cocky's" entire approval.

Clif encountered Wattles in the corridor on his way back from supper that Wednesday evening. Wattles was carrying Loring's tray to the dining room. Clif said, "Hello, Wattles," and would have passed, but Wattles would have speech with him. "Mister Bing-

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ham," said Wattles earnestly, "may I take the liberty of complimenting you, sir, on that remarkable run you made this afternoon? Really, sir, it was a most stirring performance!"

"Think so, Wattles?" laughed Clif. "Well, you're likely to see much better stuff than that if you stick around."

Wattles shook his head, apparently incredulous. "It doesn't seem possible, sir. The way you evaded those young gentlemen of the opposing side was wonderful. What I call a most clever performance, sir, a really bang-up bit of playing, sir!"

"Why, thanks, Wattles, that's very nice of you. Getting to like our style of football better, eh?"

"I'm beginning to understand it, Mr. Bingham, and I don't hesitate to say that, barring what looks to me like too heavy a stress on what I may call the slugging features, it is a more exciting game than we play, sir."

"But look here, Wattles, we don't slug!"

"No, sir? Oh, very possibly, very possibly. What I alluded to is the part where you face each other, Mr. Bingham, and then—er—mix it up! But perhaps Mister Loring has misled me. I understood from him that using the fists was permissible, quite the usual thing. I have the wrong—er—dope, sir?"

"You certainly have, Wattles!" Clif laughed. "Loring's been 'having' you, as you'd say!"

"Very likely, sir," sighed Wattles. "Thank you."

Cupples Institute, Wyndham's opponent the next

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afternoon, had been defeated by Wolcott a fortnight before, 19 to 7. To those who delighted in comparative scores to-day's contest was of much interest. The Dark Blue was expected to win, but by a close score, and whether that score would better 19 to 7 was problematical. However, Cupples didn't show as strong as expected. Wyndham outpunted her all through the game and outrushed her during two periods. Fargo went over for Wyndham's first score four minutes after the kick-off and Stoddard kicked goal. Again, in the second, Fargo added another touchdown, and again Stoddard did his part. The half ended: Wyndham 14, Cupples 0.

With Ogden replacing Jensen and two second-string men relieving Fargo by turns in the fourth period, the Dark Blue was less assertive. There were two long runs and some decent gains through the Cupples line around midfield, but the best Wyndham could do in either of the remaining quarters was to add two field-goals to her score.

Wyndham was highly pleased with the result of that afternoon's performance since, any way you looked at it, 20 to 0 was eight points better than Wolcott's score of 19 to 7. There was also a pleasant conviction that, had she wanted to, Wyndham could have done even better. The only fly in the ointment came to light the next day when a perusal of the morning papers revealed the fact that Wolcott had defeated Toll's Academy 26 to 9.

Toll's was Wyndham's next opponent, and had been

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counted on to give the Dark Blue a lot of trouble. The New York team had gone through five contests without having her goal-line crossed and it had been expected that she would hold Wolcott to a very meager score. Indeed, there were plenty at Wyndham who had, no later than yesterday, predicted for Wolcott nothing better than a tie game. Tom refused to believe his own paper and was only convinced of the correctness of the score when Clif's journal told the same story. In the light of that result it was necessary to either revise their former opinion of Toll's or to credit Wolcott with being about fifty per cent better than they had considered her. Tom's well-known capacity for pessimism helped him make out a very good case in favor of the latter alternative.

"If Wolcott can make four touchdowns on Toll's she can trim us, Clif," he declared gloomily.

"But she didn't. She made three touchdowns and a field-goal. Can't you read?"

"Well, three, then. It makes no difference. Say, I'll bet Toll's will hand us an awful wallop next Saturday!"

"How do you get that way?" asked Clif indignantly. "If we aren't as good as Wolcott this minute I'll—I'll treat! Look at yesterday's game."

"Sure, but we're playing Toll's on her own field, and you know that makes a big difference. Wolcott played her at home, with all the cheering her own way. Say, it doesn't say a word about that boy wonder of theirs, Goshawk, or whatever his name is. Accord-

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ing to this, he didn't score a point. He was in the line-up, though; played right end."

"Probably Wolcott didn't pull many forward-passes," said Clif. "Guess she didn't have to. Maybe she thought we'd have some scouts there. Say, I wonder why 'G. G.' didn't go over, or send some one."

"Next week," answered Tom. "He'd rather get his dope fresh. That's what I heard, anyway."

After church Clif's father appeared in the blue car and there was another gorgeous feed at the Inn. This time Tom was the only guest, for Walter was taking dinner with friends in the village. The weather was not at all kind, and the ride in the afternoon was short, and Mr. Bingham's brief visit came to an end well before darkness had set in. When he said good-by and was speeding off down the drive, the red tail-light gleaming between the trees, Clif had a momentary qualm of something very like homesickness. But it didn't survive the journey up to Number 34, where Tom and Billy Desmond, the latter stretched luxuriously between the protuberances of his beloved couch, were wrangling joyously over the relative merits of the Princeton and Yale teams. Besides, Clif recalled, his father had promised faithfully to come up for the Wolcott game, and that was but three weeks away. He was to make an early start from Providence on Saturday morning, get to Freeburg by noon and then take Clif and Tom and probably a couple of other fellows over to Cotterville in time for the big event. Clif got over his brief depression as he reached Num-

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ber 34, and, throwing himself on Tom's bed, remarked maliciously that, as for Yale or Princeton, there was only one real football team doing business that fall. "Listen, you two. Cornell could lick either of them without getting really warmed up well!"

Forgetting their previous differences, Tom and Billy united in a common cause and spent the succeeding ten minutes telling Clif what an ignoramus he was.

On Monday, facing a patched-up First Team, the Fighting Scrub dug its claws deep and gouged and tore its way to a one-score victory. There was no luck about it, either. It was no fluke win. Scrub just took the ball away from a somewhat dreamy First near midfield and hammered and thrust its way to the six yards. Johnny Thayer sustained facial abrasions that made him look like an utter stranger to his companions, Lou Stiles delayed proceedings while they pumped air back into him, and Tom walked with a pronounced limp for the rest of the day, but between them they landed the ball on the six yards. Coach Otis, pursuing his charges with stinging comments and much excellent advice, wore a somewhat dazed expression by then. Sportingly, however, he refrained from strengthening his team with even one of the eager aspirants who dragged their blankets along the side-line.

"Watch the ball, First!" he snapped. "Hold them now! Higgs, get down, man! Close up there, Smythe, and stop this play! Throw them back, First!"

"Let's have it!" shouted Sim hoarsely. "Smear 'em, Scrub! Let's have this score!"

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“Get into it, Scrub! Fight!” panted Tom. “Smash ’em up! You can do it! Show ’em who you are! Come on, you Fighting Scrub!”

“Third down,” called Manager Macon, refereeing, “and about four to go!” Then he blew his whistle.

The lines swayed, First thrust forward desperately, Sim, doubled over the ball, turned his back to the *mêlée* as Tom plunged past. Then Johnny Thayer reached for the pigskin, wrapped his long arms about it and crashed into the faltering Tom. Confusion, grunts, smothered words, the grinding and rasping of canvas against canvas, and then a sudden forward movement of the right of the line that as suddenly stopped and the shrill blast of the whistle. Macon dived into the pile and the confusion became order.

“Not over! About a foot to go, Scrub! Fourth down!”

The Scrub yelled its triumph, the First snarled back, the coaches hurled commands and Sim gave his signals again. What had yielded eleven feet was surely good for one, and Johnny, leading the tandem, the ball tightly hugged, dashed again at the same point and, as he struck the line, thrust the trampled turf away from him and went up and forward over the shoulders of the enemy and, ere the tide set backward, held the ball for an instant well past the last white streak!

First trotted, walked or limped back to the gymnasium a few minutes later with, for the time, nothing further to ask of life. Tom, smiting Johnny between his broad shoulders, asked solicitously yet joyously:

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“How’re you feeling, old son?” And Johnny, grinning painfully with swollen lips, croaked: “Like a two-year-old, Tom! Say, didn’t we give ’em fits?”

“Fits? We trampled on ’em, Johnny, we trampled on ’em! The Fighting Scrub, that’s us, boy!”

CHAPTER XV

TOM'S LUCK TURNS

THE discouraging thing about beating the First was that the First wouldn't stay beaten. If you scored on it one day it came back the following day and tried to see just how overbearing it could be. Or if you beat it on Monday, say, it spent the rest of the week rubbing your face in the dirt, until you almost wished you hadn't been so rash. So the Scrub's hour of triumph was brief. On Tuesday the enemy, with all its best talent present, took a long, craving look at the Scrub and proceeded to devour it. Three scores, two touchdowns and a field-goal resulted from the first period, by the end of which the Scrub was somewhat demoralized although still fighting. During the five minutes of intermission Mr. Babcock managed to restore his charges to a fair condition of usefulness. What no one could understand was why, when the Scrub had the ball, the First got the jump every time and upset every play before it reached the line. This had happened with such monotony that the most reasonable explanation seemed to be that the First had somehow since yesterday become endowed with clairvoyant powers that enabled it to know beforehand what the opponent meant to do. That the First had learned the Scrub signals had occurred to the latter, only to be

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promptly rejected. Neither Coach Otis nor Captain Lothrop would profit by such an advantage. Yet, merely to make a certainty more sure, or, perhaps, because no other remedy suggested itself, the signals, already changed when Clem Henning had joined the enemy forces, had been switched again since play had started. So that couldn't be it.

Yet something was wrong. The Scrub wasn't playing any slower than usual; in fact, both line and back-field were almost beating the ball; and yet to-day the only safe play for the Scrub was a punt, and even one of those had been nearly blocked! "Cocky" puzzled and wracked his brain without finding the solution, and the Scrub went back to the massacre still perplexed and irritated. Yet the second scrimmage period wasn't so bad, for there was only one more score by the First, and the Scrub made four first downs and got within twenty yards of the enemy's goal. Nevertheless it was a chastened and somewhat dazed squad which made its weary way back to the gymnasium in the early dusk. Perhaps the defeated army after Waterloo felt about the way the Scrub did. Yesterday they had been, to-day they were not. And no one was able to say why!

No one in the Scrub, that is. Almost any member of the First Team could have explained the mystery very promptly had he chose. But he didn't choose. The First merely looked superior and a little bit contemptuous; and it took two Firsts and three Scrubs to separate Al Greene and "Swede" Hanbury in the

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shower room after "Swede" had made what sounded like a perfectly innocent observation regarding the afternoon's proceedings. Even so the peacemakers didn't intervene in time to prevent bloodshed, for Al was sniffing through an ensanguined nose as he was led protestingly away and "Swede" was working his jaws experimentally and prodding the left side of his chin with an inquiring finger.

Beside the First Team members, however, the secret of the Scrub's overthrow was known to one other at least. Loring, seated in his chair beyond the third turn of the running track, attended by the faithful Wattles, had used his eyes and his book-learned knowledge of football to advantage, and so, after supper, when Tom did not appear promptly at the room on the first floor of East, Wattles was sent in search of him. As Tom was in Mr. Babcock's study just then, Wattles failed to find him. Clif, encountered by Wattles in a corridor, was of no assistance, for Clif had been searching for Tom himself. But Clif agreed to deliver the message when the missing one was found, and Wattles returned to report failure. Clif didn't find an opportunity to deliver that message, however, until he ran into Tom on the way to assembly hall, and so it wasn't until after study hour that the two reached Loring's room. Tom had done very little studying, for the fact that Loring had sent for him had plunged him into a sea of conjecture. It might just be that Loring could throw light on the engrossing mystery. The chap was certainly sharp! Already he had offered two or three

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suggestions that, passed on to Coach Babcock, had been adopted to the betterment of the Scrub. Tom had acknowledged to Clif no later than Saturday that Loring was really being of use!

"Say," demanded Tom anxiously when Clif had closed the door behind them, "what's on your mind, Loring?"

"What's on yours?" asked Loring smilingly.

Tom groaned. "Not a thing in the world, old son! Nothing but the trifling recollection of having been licked 23 to 0 this afternoon. Come on! Spill it! I know you've got some sort of dope."

"Well, I know one reason why you got beaten so badly, Tom."

"What is it?"

"First jumped you every time."

"O Sacred Ibis of the River Nile!" wailed Tom. "Is that the best you can do? Listen, Loring. Strange as it may sound to you, quite a few of us guessed that about five hours ago!"

"And did you also guess why?" asked Loring sweetly.

"We guessed, yes, but they were rotten guesses. Do you know?"

"I think I do. The answer is 'Jackson.' "

"Sim? How do you mean?" Tom sat up straight and opened his eyes widely.

"Didn't you notice that after the first few minutes of the second period you fellows began to make your plays go?"

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"Yes, they certainly went better in the second show."

"And after Duval went in at quarter for Jackson?"

"By Jove, that's so! But what—how—"

"Tom, if the other fellow tells you a second beforehand when the ball's going into play isn't that a bit of a help to you? Doesn't it allow you to beat the ball a bit?"

"You mean that Sim gave the play away? I mean—"

"Yes. Remember that First was penalized twice for off-side? Well, it ought to have been penalized half a dozen more times. It would have been if I'd been refereeing. Those fellows watched Jackson and started before the ball every time you had it. By the time the runner got the ball there was no chance for him. Two or three times—"

"But, great Scott, what did Jackson do? I didn't see anything wrong, Loring."

"You were too close, Tom. I wish I had the use of my legs so I could show you. Clif, you be Jackson for a minute, like a good chap. All right. Give your signals—wait, you're turning this way now, bending down. That's it. 'Signals!' Now then, you turn toward the center. You've had your left hand, or your right, maybe, on the center's back while you've been giving the signal, but now you drop it and hold your hands for the ball. Act it out that way, please."

"I'll try," laughed Clif. "Signals! Twenty-three, forty-three, seventeen! Twenty-three, forty-three—"

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He dropped his right hand from an imaginary back and—”

“See it?” exclaimed Loring.

Tom shook his head in puzzlement as Clif straightened up again. “Why, his shoulder, man!” said Loring impatiently. “First it’s way up like this where half the First Team’s linemen can see it. Then it disappears and after you’ve counted two the ball is snapped. That’s as regular as—as—why, it never fails! I timed it half a dozen times, Tom. Down went Jackson’s shoulder and from three-quarters to a second afterwards Ridgway snapped. Some one found that out and spread it. Now the First Team forwards watch Jackson’s shoulder instead of the ball or the men in front of them and when it ducks they charge. Sometimes they were past the line before the ball was in Jackson’s hands. If there had been a linesman he would have penalized First six or eight times; almost every time you chaps had the ball in the first half; but a referee or an umpire can’t see that sort of thing from where he stands. When Duval went in you began to make your plays good because the First wasn’t being tipped off when to start.”

“Heck!” murmured Tom. “So that was it ! A simple little thing like that! My sainted Aunt Jerusha! And no one saw it!”

“I don’t see what your blamed old aunt’s got to do with it,” objected Clif disgustedly. “I’ve said all along, and so has Loring, that we ought to cut out passing to the quarter except when—”

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“What’s the difference?” demanded Tom. “Sim would do the same thing if the pass was direct to the runner. He’s got to learn to keep his shoulder out of sight. Either that or quit! Say, I’ve known backs who gave the play away by shifting or moving their feet or something, but this is the first time I ever heard of a quarter giving the other team a starting signal! Heck, wouldn’t that jar you?”

“Well, I’m glad we know what’s wrong,” said Clif thankfully. “To-morrow—”

“To-morrow! Say, I’ve got to see ‘Cocky’!” Tom jumped for the door. “Loring, you win the spun glass crow-bar, old son! See you later!”

Then the door slammed.

Three minutes later Tom was enlightening a surprised, relieved and somewhat chagrined “Cocky.” But after several minutes of explanations and questions and comments the coach suddenly looked puzzled. “But look here, Kemble. An hour ago you didn’t know any more than I did. How does it happen you come along now and—”

“Loring Deane,” said Tom. “Let me tell you about him, sir.”

So Tom told, ending with: “Two or three things I spoke to you about weren’t my ideas at all. They were his. I wasn’t trying to swipe the credit for them, Mr. Babcock, but I thought you’d think I was sort of crazy if I told you about Loring. Heck, I only did it because the poor guy wanted to get in on football. He’s a regular nut, sir. Then, blamed if he didn’t

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come across with two or three good ideas, like the one about playing Bingham close in on forward-passes to the right, and it just seemed easier to let you think that they were brain-waves of my own than explain."

"I see. Well, it looks to me, Kemble, as though it would be a rather brilliant idea to encourage Deane. Guess we'd better attach him to our 'coaching staff,' "

Mr. Babcock added laughingly.

"I wish he would let you see some of the plays he's planned. Some of them look pretty good to me, but I'm not much of a hand at diagrams."

"I'd like to see them, of course," replied Mr. Babcock, not very enthusiastically. "Bring them along some evening."

"I spoke about that, sir, but he didn't seem keen for it. He's got a forward-pass play, with an end throwing, that looks sort of good, and I was wondering if we couldn't try it out, Mr. Babcock. There's a lot of us who would like mighty well to beat Minster High next Saturday. And then, of course, we've *got* to lick that Wolcott Scrub!"

"I'll drop in on Deane to-morrow and get him to show me what he's got. I'd like to make his acquaintance, too. Oh, by the way, Kemble, there's something I meant to speak of when you were in here before. How are you getting on in classes?"

"Me, sir? Well, I'm all right, I guess. Of course, I'm not what you could call a shining example right now, Mr. Babcock, but as soon as football's over I'll be sitting pretty."

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“Hm. Well, if I were you I’d find plenty of time for studying, my boy. In fact, I’d make rather an effort just now, because it wouldn’t do to have something come up and prevent you from playing. Think it over, will you? A word to the wise, as they say. Good night.”

“Now,” reflected Tom, as he made his way back to East, “just what did he mean by that? Some one’s been talking, and I’ll bet it’s that old ‘Alick.’ Maybe I’d better try to make a better showing with him. He’s been looking sort of mean lately. Yes, sir, I’d just better get back on ‘Alick’s’ good side.”

Wednesday’s sensation was the showing of the Scrub against the First in two periods of fifteen and ten minutes each. With Charlie Duval at quarter most of the time, the Scrub held the enemy on the defense all through the first period and, while it wasn’t able to get across the goal-line, it made the adversary play harder for some minutes than it had played all the fall. In the second period, with many substitutes present on both teams, the First got the upper hand and managed to hold it, finally working the ball close to the Scrub’s goal and losing it when Ogden fumbled a pass from center. A few minutes later it tried a desperate attempt at a goal from the thirty-six yards and missed it narrowly. Following that, with less than three minutes left, Scrub faked a punt and sent Tom galloping past left tackle to midfield. Tom was having one of his good days, and now, aided and abetted by Johnny Thayer, he secured two more first downs before

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First steadied and stopped the onslaught. After Johnny had punted over the line the whistle blew and ended the scoreless battle.

Loring had a tale to tell that evening. Mr. Babcock had been in to see him just after dinner and they had had a wonderful talk about football and the Scrub Team and those plays of his, for "Cocky" had made him show them, saying that Tom had told about them. "And he went away with four of them," said Loring, trying to conceal his delight. "Said he wanted to study them and that if they looked all right he'd have you fellows try them out some day soon."

"Did he take that forward-pass from end?" asked Tom.

"Yes, and he was looking at that a long time. Say, wouldn't it be corking if that worked all right?"

"Work? Of course it will work. It'll go big. Mark my words, old son."

"Well, I don't know. Maybe there's a weak spot somewhere. Mr. Babcock says you can't really tell a whole lot about plays until you've actually tried them out against another team."

"That one's all right," replied Tom confidently. "I'd like to use it against Minster next Saturday and get it working nicely for the Wolcott Scrub. I like that play. I'll bet it turns out to be the cheese, old son!"

That settled, he and Loring arranged the chess-men and Clif settled himself with a book. At five minutes to eight, the game being still undecided, the board was set aside until after study hour and Tom hurried up

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to Number 34 for his books. Billy Desmond met him at the head of the stairs.

“‘Alick’s’ been looking for you, Tom,” announced Billy casually. “Wants to converse with you in his study, young feller.”

“‘Alick’! Golly! Say, did he look—er—pleasant?”

“Extremely jovial, I thought.”

Tom groaned. “There’s breakers ahead then. He’s always sweet and pleasant just before he bites! Well, he will have to wait until after study. Heck, I wish I’d put in more time on my English this morning, instead of wasting it on math!”

Clif pushed Loring’s chair along the corridor after study hour and informed him that the chess game was going to be delayed. “Tom’s got to see Mr. Wyatt, and he’s scared to death.” Clif chuckled. “Wyatt’s the only person he ever was scared of, I guess!”

“I hope ‘Alick’ isn’t going to be nasty,” said Loring uneasily. “You know, Clif, Tom’s an awful dumb-bell about English. Yesterday I thought ‘Alick’ was going to have a conniption when Tom gave those perfectly inane answers about ‘The Ancient Mariner.’”

“He was quaint,” laughed Clif. “But I guess ‘Alick’s’ just reading him the riot-act. Hang it, you know, Tom *does* try!”

“Y-yes, I know, but—” Loring shook his head. “Oh, well, he will pull through. He’s an awfully lucky dub!”

Half an hour later, however, the lucky dub didn’t

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look the part as, closing the door of Number 4 West behind him, he thrust his hands into his pockets and stared dazedly down the short corridor. He stood there a long minute before, with a shrug and a hardening of his features, he made his way briskly around the corner and set out for East Hall. He did a great deal of thinking on the way, but the more he thought the less happy he became, and when he at last reached Loring's room he had to pause for an instant to wet his lips and work his face back into shape. When he went in he was grinning, and, since Clif had grown to know him fairly well by now, there was one occupant of the room not deceived by that grin. Loring asked anxiously: "Was he bad, Tom?"

"Well, depends," replied Tom, seating himself with unusual decorum. "What would you call bad, old son?"

"Why—"

But Clif interrupted brusquely. "What's he done, Tom? Don't act the fool! Let's hear it."

"All right! He's handed me a dirty wallop, if you must know, the old skunk! I'm on restriction."

"Restriction!" exclaimed Loring. "Why, then—then you can't—"

"So he very carefully reminded me," said Tom bitterly. "Oh, he didn't forget anything! Said the Office had had my case under consideration for some time and that only my standing in other studies had kept them from giving me the ax before. Said maybe if my time wasn't so taken up with football I'd—" Tom

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stopped and shook his head. "Oh, he put the harpoon into me good and hard, and turned it around a couple of times. Well, I'm done for this season."

"But, great Scott, isn't he going to let you make up—or something?" demanded Clif. "He can't keep you from playing all the rest of the season, can he? Why, there's more than two weeks yet!"

"Oh, sure, I can make up," laughed Tom grimly. "All I've got to do is get eighty or better from now on, write a nice little theme of five hundred words on Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner'—five hundred, mind you!—and make up some stuff in paragraph structure that I fell down on Monday. Oh, sure, I can make up all right!"

"Well, but how long have you got to—to—"

"Friday afternoon for the theme. Heck, what's the use of talking about it? I couldn't write a hundred words about that blamed old mariner, let alone five hundred! And then getting eighty! Why, hang it, I've never got better than sixty-five in English, and I never expect to! It's rotten stuff, and I hate it. Composition and rhetoric, and the whole blamed business! No, sir, I'm plumb through!"

"How do you mean, through?" asked Clif sharply.

Tom's gaze dropped to the floor, and for a moment he made no answer. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "Well, what do you think?" he asked bitterly. "Wouldn't you call it through?" Then, after a pause. "I dare say you fellows will make Johnny Thayer captain."

CHAPTER XVI

LORING TAKES COMMAND

THE chess game was never finished. Ten o'clock arrived with nothing much left to be said, and with scant lessening of the general gloom. Loring insisted that by trying hard Tom could get that theme handed in by the designated time, that he could make up the other stuff easily, and that, if he really set his mind on it, he could keep his English work up to the required standard. But even Loring realized that a little over two weeks was scant time in which to convince a sceptical instructor of one's reform, and that, with the best of luck, Tom could scarcely hope for reinstatement early enough to be of much further use to the Scrub. Clif's best suggestion was that Tom see his adviser the first thing in the morning, and ask him to intercede. Tom agreed to do this, but plainly he was not hopeful. Mr. Parks and he had not taken to each other greatly, and Tom's secret conviction was that "Cheese" wouldn't be likely to go to much trouble in the matter. Finally they parted, Clif accompanying Tom to the door of Number 34 and leaving him with a lugubrious "Oh, well, cheer up, Tom. Maybe it won't be so bad."

At breakfast Tom was strangely cheerful and ate a hearty repast. Yet nothing had happened to better

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the situation, and Clif was puzzled. Of course if Tom had decided to accept conditions philosophically, and make the best of them, Clif was pleased, but there was something in the other's manner, a sort of under surface excitement, that prevented Clif from being quite satisfied with that explanation. And then, too, Tom was so casual when Clif detained him in the corridor after breakfast. His replies to the other boy's questions were brief and vague. Yes, he was going to see "Cheese" right now. And "Cocky" afterward. That theme? Well, yes, he might have a go at that later. When Clif called "Good luck!" after him as he turned down the corridor he said: "Thanks, old son," and waved a hand almost gayly.

The interview with Mr. Parks was not disappointing only because Tom had not hoped that anything would come of it. The French instructor firmly refused to interfere in the matter, and even managed to make Tom feel that he had committed a breach of ethics in proposing such a course. Not, however, that Tom troubled about it. He thanked "Cheese" most courteously—so courteously, in fact, that the instructor frowned suspiciously—and withdrew. Several times during the forenoon Clif ran across him in the corridors, and at two recitations they occupied adjacent seats, and Clif's puzzlement increased rather than diminished. Tom neither looked nor acted his part. Clif confided the fact to Loring, adding uneasily: "He's up to something, and I'll bet it's something crazy. I wish I knew what."

The Scrub did not choose a new captain. There was

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the chance that Tom would square himself with the Office and return to his duties, and so the Scrub sent word to Tom to appoint a temporary leader and Tom's choice was Johnny Thayer, the fullback. That afternoon the First had very little trouble with the Scrub, and scored three times, holding its own goal-line inviolate. Tom's absence, both as halfback and captain, was felt. With a game against Minster High School two days off the Scrub's showing that Thursday afternoon wasn't encouraging.

Loring returned to East after the day's practice was over, a little disappointed. Not because of the Scrub's rather sorry exhibition, but because he had hoped that Mr. Babcock would try out his forward-pass play in practice, and Mr. Babcock hadn't done it. Loring supposed that Tom's absence from the team had prevented, and concluded that he would have to wait until next season for a test of the play.

Loring was still eating supper when Clif, looking much disturbed, was admitted by Wattles. "He wasn't in dining hall," announced the visitor, "and I've looked all over the place for him! He hasn't been here, has he?"

"Tom? No, I haven't seen him since noon. He's around somewhere, though, of course!"

"Yes," agreed Clif but without conviction. "Just the same, it's not like him to miss a meal. He's never done it before."

"Have you tried the library? You know, he might be working on that theme."

THE FIGHTING SCRUB

“I’ve looked everywhere I could think of except at ‘J. W.’s,’ and he was still at supper a few minutes ago. I don’t see where he can be! Unless—gee, he may be in my room! I’ll go and see.”

He hurried out, but five minutes later he was back. “He wasn’t there,” he said in reply to Loring’s mute question, “but I found this. It was on the table.” He drew an envelope from a pocket, and, with an uneasy glance at Wattles, laid it on Loring’s tray.

“You needn’t mind Wattles,” said Loring. He drew the single sheet of paper from the envelope, and, with Clif leaning over his shoulder, read the message it bore: “Dear old Clif, I’m pulling out in half an hour. Something told me a long while back that I wasn’t going to like this place, and the hunch was dead right. I’m going home to-night, and I guess I’ll be back on the old High School Team by next week. Tell Billy to give you the bundle wrapped in blue paper in my top drawer. It’s those golf hose you always liked, the ones with the green and yellow tops. I’m going to miss you, old son, but we’ll get together somehow at Christmas if it can be managed. Keep this mum until to-morrow. I’ve got to see the guardian before he gets word from the School. Well, old son, here’s luck, and I hope we win from Wolcott even if I don’t see it. Give my best to Loring. And tell Wattles Cheer-io! Yours to the last whistle, T.A.K.—P.S. I’ll write you in a day or two. If old Winslow’s nasty I’ll probably hike out somewhere on my own. I’ll let you know so

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you can drop me a line sometimes, and tell me how things are going. T.”

Loring slid the sheet back into the envelope, and returned it to Clif in silence. Clif as silently thrust the note back into a pocket. Then: “Wattles, you might take this tray, please,” said Loring, and, when Wattles had reached the door with his burden, “I say, get hold of a time-table and fetch it back with you.”

“That’s no good,” said Clif as the door closed. “He got the six-thirty-four train, and it’s twelve minutes to seven now.”

“When’s the next one south?”

“I don’t know exactly. About nine, I think.”

“Does the six-thirty-something go through to New York?”

“I don’t think so. I guess you have to change at Danbury. There are only two through trains, I think; the eleven in the morning, and the two-something in the afternoon. Even suppose he has to lie over at Danbury, though, he’d be gone before we could get there. And neither of us could go, anyhow!”

“We’ll have a look at the time-table first,” said Loring. “Tom’s done a perfectly idiotic thing, Clif, and he oughtn’t to be allowed to get away with it. He’s probably sorry already. Anyway, he will be in the morning, and the morning will be too late. We’ve got to get him back here to-night—somehow!”

“I wish we could,” agreed Clif desperately, “but I

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don't believe there's a train back from Danbury before morning, even if I got there before he'd left. Besides, if he didn't want to come back with me I couldn't *make* him, could I? He's beastly stubborn. And I'd have to cut study hour, and if faculty found it out we'd *both* be in wrong."

"No, you couldn't go," said Loring. "There'd be no sense in you getting into trouble, too. And, as you say, you couldn't make him come back if he didn't want to. And even if he really wanted to, he probably wouldn't. He'd be ashamed to quit and turn back, I guess. No, you wouldn't do, Clif."

"Then who—what—"

But just then Wattles returned with the time-table, and Loring eagerly spread it open before him. "Get a pencil, Clif, and stand by, will you? All set? Leave Freeburg 6:34. Arrive Danbury 9:07. That's a slow old train! Leave Danbury for New York—wait a minute. Yes, that's right. Leave Danbury 9:52. Arrive New York 11:35. Got it? Now let's see about the next one. Leave Freeburg—leave Freeburg—leave—Here we are! Leave Freeburg 8:54. Arrive Danbury 11:02. Hm, that's an hour and ten minutes too late. No use trying to catch him by train, Wattles."

"No, sir," agreed Wattles impassively.

"No, it can't be done. Are we broke, Wattles?"

"Oh, no, sir, I believe there's something like forty dollars in the trunk, and I have a small sum on me, sir."

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"Say, fifty altogether? That may do. You might see just what we *have* got."

"I have three or four dollars," said Clif eagerly.

"With you?"

"No, but—"

"Don't bother. We've probably enough. What do you say, Wattles?"

"Fifty-five, sir, and a bit of change."

"Plenty! All right. You know what to do, Wattles. Bring him back."

"Yes, sir, but if the young gentleman shouldn't care to return?"

"I'd use persuasion, Wattles; any kind."

"Look here," exclaimed Clif, "do you mean you're going to send Wattles?"

"Unless you can suggest some one better," answered Loring. "I'd make certain first of all that he really got off on that six-thirty-four. He might have missed it, although he probably didn't. Perhaps the agent will remember him. After that—well, Danbury's around sixty miles, I believe, and it oughtn't to take you more than an hour and a half at this time of night. It's now seven-nine, so you ought to fetch there by—let's see; allowing for delays in getting started, by nine or a few minutes later. So you'll probably get to Danbury about the same time that he does. That'll allow you about forty-five minutes to make him see sense. Tell him we sent word that if he comes back with you no one will know he ever went off. I'll leave this window here wide open, Wattles, and he ought to be

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able to get to his room without being seen. Better stop the car well down the street. Don't try to get back before midnight, either. Better give folks here a chance to get to sleep. And, Wattles."

"Yes, sir." Wattles had taken an overcoat from the closet, and now, his black derby in hand, he stood rigidly at attention, his long countenance even more than usually solemn.

"It will be worth five dollars extra to the man who drives you if he forgets all about it by to-morrow."

"So I was thinking, Mister Loring. There's a fellow works in the garage who has a car of his own, sir, and as we've struck up a bit of an acquaintance, sir, I fancy he would be quite the chap for the—er—undertaking."

"Good! Better put this memorandum of the trains in your pocket. Got the money?"

Wattles tapped the inside pocket of his coat.

"Then go to it! I'll expect you back about midnight. Good luck, Wattles!"

"Thank you, sir." Wattles reached the door and paused, a hand on the knob. "You understand, Mister Loring, I am doing this with the understanding you're not to leave the chair until I get back, sir."

"Oh, absolutely, Wattles! Cross my heart. You'll find me right here. I may be asleep, but I'll stick to the jolly old chair!"

"Thank you, sir," said Wattles again. Then the door closed behind him, and Loring, chuckling, looked at his watch.

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“Eleven minutes past,” said Loring. “Fifteen minutes to get to the village and find his man. Five minutes to get started. Five minutes more at the station. Barring accidents, Clif, he ought to roll into Danbury by nine-ten.”

“I dare say,” Clif agreed, “but if Tom is still set on going home I guess Wattles won’t be able to do much.’

“Oh, Wattles will fetch him,” said Loring confidently. “Now it’s up to us to fix things at this end. What about his absence from supper? Suppose it was noticed?”

“Why, yes, but that doesn’t matter. If a fellow doesn’t want to come to his meals he doesn’t have to. No one’s going to bother about that, but if he’s missed from assembly hall it’s good night! I wonder who’s in charge to-night!”

“That’s so. I’d forgotten about study hour.” Loring thoughtfully thumbed the pages of the time-table. Finally; “Say, is it hard to get permission to cut study hour, Clif?”

“Gee, I don’t know. I never tried it. Why?”

“I was thinking that if Tom got permission to stay away, because of illness or something, he might get by.”

“Of course, but how can he get excused if he isn’t here to ask?”

“Couldn’t you do it for him?”

The two boys observed each other in thoughtful silence for a moment. Then Clif’s eyes lighted. “Gee,

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I might!" he exclaimed. "Only—well, I'd sort of hate to have to lie, Loring."

"Don't do it. Listen. Here's how you work it." Loring's voice dropped a tone and Clif hitched his chair closer.

CHAPTER XVII

WATTLES USES COERCION

“IS it necessary, sir, for Tom Kemble to ask for permission to cut study hour himself?”

“How’s that?” asked Mr. McKnight, smiling. “If Kemble cut study hour he would have to do it himself, wouldn’t he Bingham?”

“Yes, sir. I meant, does he have to ask himself?”

“It would be much better if he asked me, or one of the other faculty members,” responded “Lovey” gravely. “His own permission, supposing he obtained it, would hardly be sufficient, I fear.”

Clif laughed. For once he didn’t find Mr. McKnight’s fooling very funny, but he must be diplomatic. “I guess I can’t say it right, sir, but you know mighty well what I mean.”

“I suspect I do, Bingham. Kemble wants to be excused from study hour, and has sent you as his ambassador. I am to presume, I fancy, that he is too ill to make the request himself. Or does he think that you’ll prove more successful than he would?” Mr. McKnight’s eyes were twinkling.

“No, sir,” answered Clif earnestly, “it really isn’t that way, Mr. McKnight. He—he isn’t able to come.”

“I’m sorry. It isn’t anything serious, I hope.” The instructor’s voice was so genuinely sympathetic that

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Clif felt ashamed of the deception he was attempting.

“I don’t think so, sir. He didn’t go down to supper, but I guess he will be all right by morning.”

“I hope so. I’m not so sure, though, you shouldn’t have gone to some one on Kemble’s floor. He’s in 34, isn’t he? However, as you are acting in his behalf, and you are on my floor, I’ll take the responsibility of excusing him. Is he in bed?”

“N-no, sir. That is, he wasn’t when I was up there.”

“Oh, better tell him to get to bed, Bingham. That’s the best place for him, no matter what’s wrong. Probably just an upset of his tummy. You chaps take awful chances, the way in which you stuff yourselves with sweet chocolate and peanuts and Heaven only knows what! By the way, Kemble’s on restriction, isn’t he?”

“Yes, sir. He got in wrong with ‘Alick’—I mean Mr. Wyatt!”

Mr. McKnight’s nose twitched, but he didn’t smile. “Too bad. I dare say that’s upset him somewhat, too. I’ll look in on him a little later and see if he needs anything.”

“I’m sure he doesn’t, sir,” said Clif hurriedly, striving to keep the sound of panic from his voice. “I think he means to go to sleep.”

“Best thing for him. Tell him it’s all right about study hour, Bingham, and that he’s to get into bed. I don’t want to find him up, reading stories, when I call!”

“Yes, sir—I mean no, sir!” stammered Clif. “I’ll tell him. I don’t believe he’d want you to bother about

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looking in on him, though.” Then, seeing or fancying he saw, the dawning of suspicion in “Lovey’s” eyes, Clif abandoned that line quickly. “Well, thank you, sir.”

“Not at all, Bingham.” When the visitor had gone Mr. McKnight protruded his lower lip, closed his eyes slightly and stared thoughtfully at the ink-well. Finally he shook his head. “If it were any one but Bingham, now,” he murmured, “I’d be inclined to suspect that something had been put over on me!”

Upstairs again, in Number 34, Clif related to Billy Desmond, in a somewhat small voice, the result of his visit. “Gee, if he does come up it’s all off! What’ll I do, Billy? I didn’t lie to him, but he will think I did, and I’d hate that!”

“Huh,” said Billy, pinching his nose as an aid to concentration of thought, “there’s just one chance, Clif, and we’ll have to risk it.” From his closet he gathered an armful of clothing, turned down Tom’s immaculate bed, heaped the clothing on the sheet and pulled blankets and coverlet back into place. From the end of the room the illusion was only fairly successful, but when Billy had turned the light out, and opened the corridor door, admitting the wan radiance from without, none but the most suspicious would have doubted that Tom lay there fast asleep, his head covered by the sheet. Billy chuckled approvingly. Then he threw a pair of his own trousers and a towel, and an old coat over the back of the chair by Tom’s bed and tucked a pair of shoes underneath it. After that, still chuck-

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ling at intervals, Billy got his books and closed the door behind himself and Clif.

“That’s the best we can do,” he said, as they made their way down the stairs. “It may fool him and it may not. The rest, Clif, is in the lap of the gods!”

It was about half-past eight when Mr. McKnight finished Chopin’s *Waltz in G Flat Major*, and arose from the piano. Study hour was the one hour of the twenty-four in which he felt at liberty to use the piano to his heart’s content, and he was loth to lose the time entailed by a visit to Number 34. Even after he was on his feet another sheet of music caught his eye, and he opened it on the rack and tentatively fingered the first bars before finally and resolutely tearing himself away. The corridors were pleasantly silent as he made his way upstairs and tapped lightly at the closed portal of Number 34. There was no reply, and he turned the knob and thrust the door inward. The room was in darkness and no sound came to him. Evidently his advice had been acted on, for Kemble was not only in bed but sleeping extraordinarily peacefully. Mr. McKnight’s gaze took in the shoes beneath the chair, and the garments above. The sleeper remained undisturbed, oblivious of the intrusion. The instructor smiled as he closed the door softly again and walked noiselessly away.

“Nothing much wrong with him, I guess, if he can sleep like that,” he told himself as he sought the stairway. “Probably be all right when he wakes up.” Then

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his thoughts went forward to the piece of music on the piano rack, and his steps became swifter.

That ride to Danbury was long and wearisome to Tom. Waiting in the shadows of the station at Freeburg, after he had decided not to risk purchasing a ticket, but to pay his fare on the train, had been sort of exciting, and even after the station lights and the lights of the town itself had faded behind him a certain zest in the adventure had remained. But soon, what with the overheated car, the uncomfortable seat, the numerous stops and the dust that drifted in at every opening, the excitement dwindled fast. At the end of an hour he had begun to doubt the brilliancy of the exploit. For one thing, it was going to be extremely hard sledding to convince his guardian that he had taken the right course; the more so since Tom hadn't yet succeeded in convincing himself. Mr. Winslow, an estimable gentleman despite Tom's prejudices, was a lawyer, and, being a lawyer, his judgment was not easily swayed. You just had to have a good case, and Tom was horribly afraid he hadn't! Well, one thing was certain. If Old Winslow insisted on his returning to Wyndham he just wouldn't! No, sir, he'd run away first. Maybe he'd go to sea. No, he wouldn't, either. You couldn't play football at sea! But he'd go somewhere.

Then there was Clif. He had grown to be rather fond of Clif. Until six weeks ago he had never had a real chum. He had been friendly with lots of fellows,

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but close to none. He was going to miss Clif a whole lot; was missing him already, in fact. And there was Billy, too; and Loring Deane. They were, all three, corking chaps, and back home there wouldn't be any one to take their places. If it wasn't that it was already too late—

He pushed his suitcase forward where he could set his feet on it, let his knees dig into the back of the seat in front, and moodily stared along the length of the ill-lighted coach. No, it was too late to change his mind. Study hour was almost over now, and they'd have discovered his absence long since. Besides, there probably wasn't any way of getting back, even if he wanted to; and, of course, he didn't. Wyatt had played him a rotten trick, and to-morrow the old pest would maybe realize it! And, anyway, what was the good of being back there when he couldn't play football again this season? Heck, he had done just what any fellow with an ounce of gumption and spirit would do, and he was glad of it!

These reflections brought him to the lights of the junction, and a few minutes later he was descending the car steps, one of a half-hundred passengers from the north. To find himself staring into the solemnly respectful countenance of Wattles was such a surprising experience that it was several seconds before he found his voice, and during those seconds his suitcase was removed from his grasp. Finally: "Why, Wattles, were you on that train?" he exclaimed.

"No, sir, I came by car," replied the other. "Quite

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a bit colder, sir, isn't it? One can do with a coat to-night, Mister Tom, and I see you have yours with you." Suitcase in hand, Wattles led the way around the end of the station, and it was not until he had started across the track on the farther side that Tom realized what was happening.

"Hold on, Wattles! What's the idea?" he asked, stopping.

"The car's just over here, sir."

"What car? I didn't order any car!"

"No, sir. Mister Loring and Mr. Clif sent it. I was to tell you that everything was quite all right, sir. It's all absolutely *sub rosa*, Mister Tom. We'll get back to the school by midnight—"

"So that's it?" Tom laughed roughly. "Expect me to go back with you in the car, eh? Well, nothing doing, Wattles. I'm off that dump for keeps. Let's have that bag, please."

"Certainly, sir, but if you wouldn't mind just coming across to the car. I've a robe and you'll be quite warm. Your train doesn't leave for rather more than a half-hour, sir, and I'd like very much to deliver my message, Mister Tom."

"Oh, well, all right," Tom grumbled. "Go ahead. But I'll tell you right here and now, Wattles, that it's no good. It was mighty nice of them to do this, and all that, but I've no idea of going back."

"Quite so, sir. Thank you. Right this way."

The car stood well away from the station, the street lights revealing its black bulk, and the figure of the

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driver on the front seat. Tom laughed as Wattles held the tonneau door open. "Some class to you, Wattles! Where'd you get the boat?"

"In the village, sir." Wattles was unfolding a large and heavy rug. "It's not a new car, sir, but it's really most competent."

"Funny idea—" began Tom, with a chuckle. Then; "Say! *What are you trying—*"

The big robe which Wattles, standing beside him in the back of the car, had spread open had enveloped him. For the briefest instant Tom thought that Wattles, meaning to lay the rug across his knees, had stumbled against the suitcase and fallen against him. But that idea vanished before the sudden knowledge that Wattles had tricked him! He shouted protestingly, but the folds of the thick cloth, dust laden and odorous of the stable, were about his head, muffling the outcry and almost choking him. He strove to get to his feet, to push himself free, but in vain. Something, a rope or a strap, cinched his arms to his body. He kicked out wildly, felt himself slip from the seat to the floor, found the suitcase under his shrouded head, and knew that Wattles was sitting on his legs!

It had all taken less than a minute, and now the driver had scrambled back to the front seat, and the engine was shaking the car. Then they were moving. Tom, panting from his exertions, relaxed and took a long breath. Dust filled his throat and nostrils, and he sneezed violently. Wrath induced one final struggle, but, although momentarily unseated, Wattles remained

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in command of the situation. Tom stopped writhing and considered events with a fair degree of calmness.

The car, a good one although of ancient vintage, after negotiating the streets of the town at moderate speed, was now on a straight hard road, and the engine's voice arose to a louder song. Wattles, who had removed his overcoat before meeting Tom—it was a newish coat, and he wanted nothing unfortunate to happen to it in case Tom proved obstinate—shivered as, sitting sidewise on Tom's legs, he strove to keep his balance, and at the same time protect himself from the rush of the cold night wind. It was a most uncomfortable position, but Wattles was game. With Wattles duty was duty, and he was prepared to sit like that all the way back to Freeburg if necessary.

But it wasn't necessary. Some ten minutes after they had left the station there was a series of muffled sounds from under the robe and Wattles, leaning nearer, said: "Pardon, Mister Tom. Will you say that again, please, sir?"

"I said if you don't take this pesky thing off I'll smother!" answered Tom through the folds.

"Yes, sir, I'm afraid it's rather uncomfortable, and I'm sure you'll understand, sir, how much I deplore the necessity of the—the methods—"

"I can't hear what you're saying!" shouted Tom in exasperation. "*Take this off me! Let me out!*"

"Certainly, sir, only, asking your pardon, Mister Tom, I must have your agreement not to leave the car."

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"Go to thunder!" said Tom.

"Yes, sir." Wattles retreated, shivering violently. After a minute more sounds reached him from beneath the rug and again he leaned closer.

"I'll promise, Wattles, you blamed idiot! Only take this horse blanket off me!"

"Yes, indeed, sir! Just a moment!" Wattles's hands were busied, the restraint vanished from Tom's arms, the awful robe dragged chokingly away from his face, and he sat up, gasping. Wattles, balancing himself precariously on his feet, was holding the robe and, as shown by the brief radiance of a passing light, shivering like an aspen. Tom could almost hear the chattering of his teeth. That momentary vision of the long, mournful countenance, agitated by the shivers that chased up and down Wattles's spine, was too much for Tom. He forgot that he was dreadfully angry, and humiliated and burst into wild laughter.

The driver turned an inquiring face, looked briefly, and unemotionally gave his attention back to the road. Wattles, fearing hysteria, looked down in grave anxiety, and shivered harder than ever. At last: "For the love of mud, Wattles, put your coat on!" gasped Tom as he weakly pulled himself onto the seat.

"Yes, sir, just what I was about to do, sir." Nevertheless, Wattles first placed the robe over Tom's knees, and tucked it about him carefully. Then, at last, he managed to get his wavering hands into the armholes of his coat, buttoned it tightly and seated himself at the extreme limit of the wide seat. "If you'd prefer

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to sit in front, sir, I fancy you'd find it quite a bit warmer."

"I'm all right, but don't be an ass, Wattles. Slide over here and get some of this over you."

"Thank you, Mister Tom, but I'm very comfortable."

"You do as I tell you," commanded Tom ferociously. "Mind you, Wattles, you and that pal of yours there may be able to get the best of me when I'm not looking for it, but I can lick either one or both of you in a fair scrap. Here, lay this across and sit on the edge of it."

"Yes, sir. And I'm quite certain you'd be a match for us both, Mister Tom, and no mistake."

"I'll say so," agreed Tom, mollified. "Just the same, Wattles, I've got to hand it to you for turning a neat trick. I suppose, though, Loring planned that, eh?"

"No, sir," replied Wattles modestly. "Mister Loring just said I was to bring you back. Beyond that, sir, I was obliged to proceed quite on my own. Sorry, sir, that the exigency of the occasion demanded a certain amount of coercion."

"Coercion! Is that what you call it, Wattles? Man, you're a scream!"

"Should I have said compulsion?" asked Wattles anxiously.

"I'll say you should!" Tom's spirits were rising rapidly. Of course, he hadn't meant to return to Wyndham; hadn't wanted to, indeed; but the matter had been taken out of his hands, and, now that the die

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was cast, he would make the best of it. And, sitting there snuggled under the warm rug, with the old car hitting on all six, with the nipping air stinging his face, he listened to Wattles's explanation of the events leading up to his present situation and felt that the best was mighty good!

CHAPTER XVIII

A NEW PLAY IS TRIED OUT

CLIF didn't take Walter Treat into his confidence that night. Not that he didn't thoroughly trust Walt's discretion, but there was no sense in taking chances. He wanted to stay awake, and listen for sounds outside or in the Hall that would announce Tom's surreptitious return; for Loring's absolute confidence in Wattles's powers of persuasion had ultimately convinced Clif that Tom would return; but after a heroic effort lasting some fifteen or twenty minutes he had to give it up, and when Tom's fortunes again engrossed his mind, it was twenty-two minutes past seven on Friday morning. Clif made a record toilet, and was on his way to Number 34 before Walter was more than half dressed. Billy Desmond was alone in the room when Clif got there, but a mere glance at Tom's tumbled bed told the story.

"All right?" whispered Clif hoarsely.

"Guess so", Billy chuckled. "He's gone to wash. All I know is that he was in bed when I woke up, and I had the dickens of a time getting him out. He's still half asleep."

Tom staggered in a moment later, looking rather haggard, and very, very sleepy. His greeting to Clif was a wan smile, but while he struggled into his clothes

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and Clif kept an anxious eye on his watch, he narrated his adventures briefly, yawning cavernously the while. "We got here about five minutes to twelve and stopped the car over on Stoddard Street," he concluded. "Then Wattles and I went up the lane a ways, and headed for East. Wattles had my bag. I'd forgotten about the brook, and it was pretty dark, and so Wattles stepped right into it. Luckily the bag got away from him and landed on the bank. I helped him out, and we got in Loring's window, and I stuck the bag in his closet and came on up here."

"And no one saw you?" asked Clif anxiously.

"I don't—" Tom yawned widely—"think so."

"Fool's luck," commented Billy, slipping into his coat, and heading for the door. "That's all I've got to say!"

"Go roll your hoop," said Tom without rancor.

"Just the same, Tom, you know you were an absolute dumbbell, now don't you?" demanded Clif, as he held the other's jacket and tried to hurry him into it.

"I guess so. I don't know. How much time we got?"

"Minute and a quarter."

"Fine. I've made it in fifty seconds flat. Come on!"

That afternoon Loring did not attend practice. Instead, he and Tom sat at opposite sides of the table in Loring's room and Tom, alternately despairing and hopeful, worked on that theme. Loring gave no aid in the actual writing, nor even in the composition, but

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he did make helpful suggestions when Tom faltered, and he did suggest numerous changes in spelling. It was close to five o'clock when the minimum of five hundred words was finally attained—with one word to spare, according to Tom's sixth count—and Tom hurried across to West and delivered the result to Mr. Wyatt. "Alick" glanced briefly at the three pages. Then:

"Did you have any help on this?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. If I hadn't I'd never have got it written!"

"How much help, Kemble, and from whom?"

"Loring Deane, sir. I wrote it all myself. He didn't tell me what to say, but he kept after me until I'd done it, and he sort of suggested things to—to write about."

"In your opinion then, it represents your efforts, and not Deane's?"

"Yes, sir! And, Mr. Wyatt, it was some effort!"

"Alick's" customary gravity cracked just a little. "Well, all right, my boy. I'll let you be the judge. Now see if you can't come to class a lot better prepared than you have been. And about that paragraph structure business, Kemble. When do you want to make up on that? This evening all right for you?"

"Oh, gosh, Mr. Wyatt! Give me another day, won't you? I haven't had time to study that at all, sir!"

"If you'd kept up with the course, Kemble, you wouldn't have to study it now. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, sir," agreed Tom sadly.

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“Yes, and you’d be playing football to-day, too. You know, Kemble, I told you when you first came that I meant to teach you English. Remember? I might have turned you down, and with good reason, in which case you wouldn’t be here to-day. But I stretched a point and passed you, giving you fair warning, though, that I meant to ride you hard, my boy. You can’t truthfully say that I didn’t warn you of what was coming to you, can you?”

“No, sir, I understood. And I started out all right, too, didn’t I, Mr. Wyatt? Wasn’t I doing pretty well until—until just lately?”

“You’ve never done ‘pretty well,’ Kemble, but you did show me for a while that you were trying, and as long as I knew that I didn’t turn the screws. But about two weeks ago you stopped trying. I warned you several times, but you appeared to think I didn’t mean it.”

“I got sort of busy about football, Mr. Wyatt. They made me captain of the Scrub, and there was a good deal to—think about, and—”

“Yes, I know all that. Football is a fine game, Kemble, and I’ve never said a word against it. But football isn’t what you came here for. At least, I hope it isn’t. In any case, it isn’t what your parents sent you to Wyndham to learn, and the sooner you realize that the better for you. I’ll give you until Monday on that examination, but you must be prepared then. Come to me here at seven Monday evening, and I’ll hear you.”

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"Monday?" exclaimed Tom relievedly. "Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Wyatt. I'll have it Monday all right! You see if I don't!"

"*You'll* see if you don't," responded the instructor grimly.

By not watching the Scrub Team practice that afternoon Loring missed something that would have interested him. The First called off the scrimmage, choosing to spend the time in perfecting certain plays to be used on the morrow against Toll's, and so Mr. Babcock, following "G. G.'s" example, devoted much of the session to a general preparation for the Minster High School game. But he also found time to try out two of Loring's plays, one of them the forward-pass strategy that had aroused Tom's interest. He had no intention of using them against Minster, and so the plays did not get beyond the first stage of development. They were explained and the players were placed in their correct positions, and then, several times at a walk and several times at full speed, they were enacted against an opposing line of ten substitutes. The forward-pass play was rather intricate at first, or seemed so, and perhaps it was just as well that Loring wasn't there to watch the players get tangled up. Their efforts would doubtless have made him exceedingly nervous! But the last time that Heard tossed the ball back to Clif and Clif swept it forward down the field the performance went with a very fair degree of snap and smoothness. What Mr. Babcock's verdict on the play was did not appear. The second play, though,

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held forth small promise, and Clif didn't have to await "Cocky's" judgment to know that it would not be added to the Scrub's equipment.

Loring, learning from Clif that the forward-pass play had been experimented with, looked for some word from Mr. Babcock, but none came that evening, nor the next day. In fact, the following week was well along before Loring heard again from the Scrub coach. That Friday evening was largely spent by Loring and Clif in trying to get Tom to acknowledge that he had been several sorts of an idiot and that he owed them the deepest gratitude for rescuing him from a ruinous position. Tom, however, preferred to argue about it. At heart, he knew that he had acted foolishly, and was tremendously grateful, but he didn't intend to say so in so many words. The best they could get from him was the acknowledgment that, now that he *was* back, he was glad of it, and that it was decent of them to take so much trouble about him. He tried to get Loring—and, afterwards, Wattles—to tell him how much the kidnaping expedition had cost so that he could pay back the money. But Loring wouldn't tell, and Wattles's countenance was absolutely vacant when he was questioned on the subject. He couldn't seem to remember a thing! In the end Tom gave up in despair and nursed a mild grouch for some minutes. It was dissipated, however, when Loring got Wattles to tell about falling into the brook. Not that Wattles was intentionally humorous. Quite the contrary. That was what made it so funny.

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The First Team departed for Toll's Academy at eleven-thirty the next forenoon, twenty-eight strong. The game would be the last real test before Wolcott was encountered, and so the result was awaited with a good deal of interest. Wolcott had defeated Toll's by 26 to 9 and Coach Otis's warriors hoped to at least equal that creditable performance. The students sent the team off with confident and vociferous cheers before they piled into dining hall for an early dinner that would permit them to follow at one o'clock. Of course not all the fellows made the trip, and amongst the half-hundred or so who remained at Wyndham, were, besides the Scrub Team members, Tom and Loring.

Tom had somewhat testily declared his intention of spending the afternoon in study, but Loring and Clif had only grinned. The picture of Tom occupied in the pursuit of knowledge while the Fighting Scrub battled with an enemy somehow lacked distinctness! Anyhow, Tom didn't spend that afternoon in Number 34 West. He occupied Wattles's stool beside Loring's chair, which had been wheeled to the corner of the grand stand, and he and Wattles, the latter slightly in the background, watched proceedings with about equal interest. It was a good game, a hard, fast, close contest that wasn't decided until, in the fourth period, while the small audience held its collective breath, Hoppin, sent in for the purpose, added a goal to the Scrub's second touchdown. Scrub had set out with the intention of beating Minster High as thoroughly as the

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First had, but when the second quarter had ended with the score Minster High 6, Wyndham Scrub 6, that laudable ambition had been modified. The Scrub concluded on second thought to be satisfied with any sort of a victory!

Jimmy Ames, back once more on the team, contributed a good share toward the Scrub's triumph, for it was Jimmy who found a ball that no one seemed to have any interest in at the moment, and, tucking it into the crook of an elbow, sped thirty-eight yards with it, and placed it three streaks distant from the Minster goal-line. Johnny Thayer advanced it six and Lou Stiles two yards. Then Heard, officiating in Tom's former position, got almost free outside tackle on the right, and was piled up on the one yard, and from there, although he had to make three tries, Johnny took it across. Sim Jackson fumbled a poor pass from "Babe," and there was no goal. That was in the first period. Minster scored her six points in the second, aided by a fumble by Sim and a long forward-pass that swept the visitors from just past midfield to Scrub's twenty-six yards. Twice Minster fooled the defenders by the antiquated fullback run from kicking position play, and finally tossed the pig-skin across the center for a twelve yard gain and a touchdown. Minster, though, had even poorer luck than the Scrub when it came to the try-for-point, for the ball eluded the kicker entirely and rolled back to the twenty yards before it was recovered. A subsequent desperate attempt to run it back to the line was

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upset—as was the runner—by Clif, who made what was possibly the one perfect tackle of his football career to date.

Minster's second score followed closely on the beginning of the second half, and this time a blocked punt gave her her chance. Johnny Thayer got the ball away nicely enough, but in some manner a Minster forward leaked through "Babe," and his nose got squarely in the path of the ball. There was no question about that, for the evidence was prominent all during the rest of the battle! The ball rebounded, probably in great astonishment, and was secured by a Minster guard on Scrub's seventeen yards. From there the visitors took it by short and certain plunges across the line in just eight plays, and, although the pass was good this time, and although the Minster quarter had plenty of time to kick, the pigskin, perhaps still unnerved by its recent experience, went wide of the goal. So when, in the middle of the final period, Clif, taking a forward-pass from Thayer on Minster's twenty-six yards, scampered with it across the last trampled white mark, victory depended on the try-for-point. And when "Hop" took Stiles's place and sent the "old melon" fair and true across the bar the small contingent of Wyndhamites made enough noise for a whole cheering section!

News of the Wyndham-Toll's game didn't reach the school until just before supper time, but when it came it was wonderful! Wyndham 33, Toll's 6! The Dark Blue had bettered Wolcott's score by ten points! It had

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scored one more touchdown than Wolcott and been scored against less! Wyndham went in to supper in a joyous and rather noisy state. And later in the evening, when the First came rolling up the driveway in the two big busses that had taken them back and forth over the road, it was given a welcome worthy of a triumphant Cæsar.

CHAPTER XIX

BAD NEWS

IN Loring's room that Sunday morning the steam radiator was hissing softly, perhaps at the chill, damp current of air blowing in on it from the partly opened window, the floor was liberally strewn with pages, and sections of three Sunday papers and three youths, one for each paper, sat or sprawled about in lazy comfort. Wattles, just a trifle more proper and solemn than on week-days, with his best dark suit on, and his black derby immaculately brushed, had left a moment before for the village, a prayer-book and hymnal firmly clutched in one hand. Wattles always left early for church, walked slowly, and with dignity, and, having reached the small edifice at the far end of the village, spent a pleasant quarter of an hour watching the arrival of the other members of the congregation. After his departure Tom rescued the comic supplement from beside his chair, and gave it his attention. So long as Wattles, redolent of sabbatical decorum, had been there he had not had the courage to show interest in it. He felt that Wattles would strongly, if silently, disapprove; and since the incident at Danbury Tom had entertained for Wattles a vast respect. His enjoyment of the highly colored pages was, though, speedily interrupted by Clif.

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"Did you see what Yale did to the Army, Tom?"

"No, I wasn't able to get over to New Haven."

"Weren't you, really? Well, Yale piled up 31 to Army's 10."

"I was just reading it," said Loring, coming into view from behind his paper. "Yale's finally got a winning team, I think."

"That's what you hear every year," said Clif. "Then it doesn't come off! Still, she must be a heap better this year to run up 31 against Army. Brown didn't do so badly, either."

"What did she do?" inquired Tom innocently. "Beat Vassar?"

"She beat St. Bonaventure, 19 to 0, and that's—"

"Saint Who? What high school's that, Clif?"

"Shut up! It's the 'high school' that scored against Cornell two or three weeks ago, and a team that can do that—"

"Where do you get that stuff? Everybody scores on Cornell. It's quite the proper thing to do this year. Colgate did it, and Williams, and now Dartmouth."

"Yes, and what was Cornell doing while Dartmouth made a little old seven points?"

"That's what I was wondering," replied Tom. "Maybe she was having afternoon tea, eh?"

"Seems to me," laughed Loring, "you chaps are mightily interested in games that don't mean much to you. What about Wolcott's showing against Riverside Military? It doesn't make our score against Toll's look so fine, eh?"

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"I guess Riverside's pretty weak," said Tom. "What's she done this season, anyway?"

"I don't know much about her," answered Loring, "but 41 to 0 is an awful score! It looks as if Wolcott might still have an edge on us, Tom. What I don't understand, though, is about that fellow Grosfawk. He played only part of the time yesterday, and nothing is said about him. I thought he was Wolcott's particular wonder, and that they were building a bunch of plays around him."

"It is sort of queer," said Tom. "The way they tell it here, Grosfawk was the whole thing last year when they played us. This year you don't hear anything about him."

"He's only a substitute, as I figure it," remarked Clif. "You see him getting in now and then, but he's never in the first line-up."

"Maybe it's strategy," Tom offered. "Maybe they're trying to make us think he's not much so we won't worry about him. Then they'll start him, and he will run rings around us, like last year."

"Well, I suppose Mr. Otis knows what's doing," said Loring. "Mr. Hilliard, and the fellows who went over yesterday to see Wolcott play, have probably brought back some dope."

"'Pinky' is all right," observed Tom, "but it seems to me that 'G. G.' ought to have gone himself. By the way, they say he didn't come back to school."

"Who, Pinky? I saw him at prayers this morning," said Clif.

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“No, you dumbbell, ‘G. G.’ Billy said he was feeling rotten about the time the game was over, and they stopped at a drug store afterwards and ‘G. G.’ got dosed up there, and then went on home. Back tomorrow, I suppose. Say, how badly was Fargo hurt? Anyone know?”

“You hear all sorts of yarns,” said Clif. “Guy Owens, the yellow haired fellow who helps manage, said that Fargo would be laid up most of the week. Then I heard that he got hurt in the same leg last year, and that the doctor told him he oughtn’t to play any more.”

“Imagine ‘Big Bill’ paying any attention to that,” chuckled Tom. “Well, we won’t need him next Saturday, I suppose. This High Point game is a cinch, they say. Guess he will be right there on both feet the week after!”

“From what I get about yesterday’s merry little fracas, it was a regular humdinger,” said Clif. “I’d like to have seen it. Toll’s roughed it up considerable. One of her fellows was put out by the referee, they say.”

“Sure it wasn’t the umpire?” asked Tom mildly.

“Well, umpire then. Anyway, our bunch got pretty well bunged up. Raiford’s wearing plaster all over his face to-day.”

“Must be an improvement,” said Tom. “I never did like Raiford’s face.”

Mr. Otis was not back the next day when the First got out for practice and Mr. Hilliard, his assistant, took

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charge. There was no scrimmage with the Scrub, for the First, while it had run up a big score against its adversary on Saturday, had found plenty of opposition, and not a few of the players were nursing wounds. "Big Bill" Fargo didn't even put in an appearance, although most of the temporary invalids sat on the bench or, draped in their blankets, followed the drill. The Scrub, left to its own devices, took up that new forward-pass play and another, of Mr. Babcock's devising, and worked at them until they were running quite smoothly. Of course, however, as Loring realized, the forward-pass play couldn't be fairly judged until it had been tried out in actual playing. The opposition put up by the Scrub Team substitutes, with "Cocky" at left guard to make up the eleven, provided no real test for the play.

That evening, after spending the whole afternoon groaning and writhing in Number 34, Tom faced Mr. Wyatt across that well-remembered desk and somehow floundered through an examination. Mr. Wyatt displayed no enthusiasm over the performance, but he did say, somewhat wearily, at the end: "All right, Kemble. I haven't the heart to say what I ought to. Please go before I give way to unmanly emotion!"

"Yes, sir," said Tom, "Thanks!"

Deserted by his chums—for Clif, too, had failed to show up after supper—Loring sat in his chair with the chess-board before him. He had started to work out a problem, but had not got far with it. Another prob-

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lem, having nothing to do with chess, had substituted itself, and for a long while Loring sat and tapped the black queen against the edge of the board, and stared intently at nothing. Then, he set the board aside and propelled the chair across to the door and through it, and made his slow way around to West Hall. "Babe" Ridgway happened along and pushed him the last part of his journey, depositing him by request in the reading room. Loring was seeking something he was not at all certain existed in the reading room, and it took him several minutes, and much dexterous filling and backing between chairs and tables and shelves—fortunately the room was not well occupied—to discover that it did exist. Having secured it, he made out a slip with the date and his name, and put it in the clip beside the wide, shallow shelf. Then, with the issues of the daily paper published at the nearest metropolis of the state from the middle of September to last Saturday in front of him, he returned to his room. To his right as he left the reading room, beyond the library, a considerable throng of fellows were congregated around the recreation room doorway, and some subject of more than ordinary interest appeared to engross them, for every one seemed to be talking at once and there was quite an atmosphere of excitement down there. But, although mildly curious, Loring preferred not to venture into the crowd with his chair, and so made his way back to East Hall. Once there, he devoted the rest of the time before study hour, and much time thereafter to a careful and thoughtful perusal

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of the many papers he had brought back with him; or, to be more exact, to certain items in those papers.

Tom, coming downstairs after that enervating experience in Mr. Wyatt's study, saw the crowd at the end of the corridor, and joined it as fast as he could. An acquaintance named Bumstead, a slight, sandy haired youth, who wore big, round spectacles, and whom Tom disliked cordially, presented himself as the nearest source of information. Bumstead turned incredulous, but joyous eyes on the inquirer.

"Say, haven't you heard?" he exclaimed almost shrilly. "Gee, where have you been?"

"Picking daisies," replied Tom impatiently. "Spill it!"

"Otis is sick, and can't come back the rest of the season! He's got the 'flu'! They just got word from him."

"Roll your hoop!" said Tom incredulously. "Who says so?"

"Gee, it's true! Ask any one. Faculty's called a meeting of the Athletic Committee, too. This evening. In 'Pinky's' room. Ask any one."

"If 'G. G.'s' so blamed sick how could he write and tell about it?" demanded Tom witheringly. "Of course, I'm not saying he hasn't got the 'flu'; lots of folks have it; but it's crazy to say he isn't coming back."

"Maybe he didn't write himself," said Bumstead. "Maybe it was the doctor or some one. Anyway—"

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But Tom had caught sight of Joe Whitemill, of the First Team, and he plowed his way through to him.

"What's it all about, Whitemill?" he asked anxiously. "Is 'G. G.' really out of it?"

"Eh? Oh, hello, Kemble. Yes, that's the way we get it. He's down with influenza, and the doctor says he won't be able to do any more coaching this season. I don't know where the story came from, though. Every one has it, but no one knows where it started. For my part—"

"It's straight goods," interrupted Jimmy Ames, appearing at Tom's side. "Mr. Conover told Dave Lothrop and Dave spilled it a few minutes ago. Faculty's sent word to the Committee to get busy, and there's going to be a meeting in a few minutes."

"But, Great Heck!" exclaimed Tom. "What—what—why, that'll play the very dickens, won't it?"

Whitemill grinned, but the grin held no humor. "Oh, no, not at all! Swapping coaches ten days before the big game is a mere trifle, Kemble. It's easy when you—"

"There won't be any swapping," predicted Jimmy. "Where'd we get a new coach now? Anyway, he wouldn't know the team, and he'd be worse than none. 'Pinky' will take Otis's place, of course."

"That's so," said Tom. "Well—but, heck, fellows, it's going to make a difference! How does 'Pinky' know what Otis was going to do? Or does he know?"

"Search me," said Whitemill despondently. "I suppose they've talked things over a good deal, though."

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Anyway, we'll pull through somehow. Hang it, we'll beat that bunch without any coach at all if we have to!"

"Spoken like a hero!" commented Jimmy Ames. "Just the same, if I had anything up on the Wolcott game I'd begin to hedge just about now, old dear. Say, Dave's fit to be tied, fellows. He was talking about canceling the game, and all that stuff a few minutes ago up in 'Swede's' room."

"Cancel the game!" growled Whitemill. "I'll say not! That would be a swell thing to do! Gosh, I'd rather get licked to smithereens than not play at all! Besides, why, thunder, Jimmy, you can't crawl out of a game just because you've lost your coach! What's the matter with Dave, anyway?"

"Oh, he was just getting rid of some of his peeve, I suppose," said Jimmy. "Just talking to relieve his mind. I don't blame him, though, for being a mite upset. Gosh, he's captain, and if this thing's as bad as they say it is—"

"There's the gong," broke in Tom. "A grand lot of studying we'll do to-night! Say, where's 'Pinky'? Any one seen him? Why doesn't some one ask him what the real facts are?"

"You do it," suggested Whitemill. "He's probably in just the right temper to answer fool questions."

"Fool questions be blowed!" called Tom after the halfback's retreating form. "How come we fellows haven't some right to know what's going on, you big cheese?"

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“Just what is it you’d like to know?” inquired a voice at Tom’s back. Tom, startled, turned to find Mr. Hilliard facing him soberly from the foot of the stairs. Tom swallowed. Then, conscious of the sudden silence that had fallen about him, he recovered his assurance.

“About Mr. Otis, sir,” he answered. “They say he’s sick and won’t be able to come back all season. I—we’d like to know if that’s true.”

“Quite true, Kemble,” replied “Pinky” gravely. “Mr. Otis has contracted influenza, and, so his doctor writes us, is a very sick man. Even if he recovers within the customary time he will not be in condition to continue his work here with the Team. It is a very unfortunate happening, both for Mr. Otis and for the School, but we must all make the best of it. The gong has rung, fellows.”

CHAPTER XX

“COCKY” MAKES A CALL

DURING the rest of that evening, and most of the following day a new rumor was to be met at every corner. Excitement was followed by consternation as the school came to a fuller realization of the gravity of the catastrophe. A new coach could be found to direct the Team's course for the rest of the way, but he would be handicapped from the start by a lack of knowledge both of the men he was to handle, and of the foundation already constructed by his predecessor. He might, too, fail to command the confidence of the players. The report that Mr. Hilliard was to take charge met with little enthusiasm. "Pinky" doubtless possessed the advantage of Mr. Otis's confidence, and he knew the ground, but few of the First Team credited him with the qualities required of a successful coach. Oddly enough, the solution of the quandary arrived at by the Athletic Committee Tuesday occurred to few beforehand. The Committee's decision was awaited impatiently. The rumored meeting did not take place Monday evening, and until after dinner on Tuesday the school had to be satisfied with speculation. Then, at last, the news was out.

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Mr. Babcock would succeed Mr. Otis as First Team Coach. Mr. Hilliard would continue as Assistant Coach. Mr. Connover would take over the Second Team.

Wyndham School blinked its eyes and wondered why it hadn't thought of "Cocky"! Why, "Cocky" was just the ticket! Oh, anyhow, he was lots better than a stranger who wouldn't know anything about anything! On the whole, the decision met with hearty approval. Even those who knew little of the practical side of football, but had encountered Mr. Babcock in his rôle of Physical Director felt certain that he possessed to a degree the stern, disciplinary qualities associated by them with the gridiron martinet. Those who had ever really tried Mr. Babcock's patience during gymnasium instruction gave it as their studied opinion that "'Cocky' was a hard-boiled egg, and ought to make a corking coach for the First!" Perhaps there were some on the First who didn't wholly approve of the Football Committee's selection, but they were few in number and were not talking for publication. It remained for the Scrub Team to utter the only disapproving note. Scrub protested loudly that it wouldn't stand for it! What was the idea, snatching its coach like that? Didn't it have any rights? And what in the dickens did "Steve" Connover, the baseball coach, know about football? What was to become of the Scrub Team, anyway?

This, of course, was a selfish view of affairs, one which took no thought of "the greatest good to the

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greatest number” and all that sort of thing, and so it found little sympathy. And after its first burst of indignation the Scrub relapsed into grumbles and accepted the inevitable—and “Steve.” “Steve” was rather a surprise, too. He proved in short order that, while he might be a specialist in baseball, and not know everything there was to know about the gridiron game, he was quite competent to see the Scrub Team through the rest of its season. And he made rather a hit with the fellows at the outset by not “pulling a line of guff,” as “Wink” Coles elegantly expressed it, about being unfamiliar with the duties and relying on them all to help him. No, “Steve” didn’t ask any assistance. He just took hold on Tuesday afternoon at twenty minutes to four, and gave each and every one a good, hard “six licks at the dummy,” not hesitating to tell them how rotten they were—most of them—nor being at a loss for improving instructions. They resented his criticism more because it seemed to reflect on “Cocky” than for more personal reasons, but they didn’t harbor resentment long. “Steve” kept them too busy, maybe. They trotted over and tried to take a fall out of the First at four-thirty, and didn’t do so badly, for the First still lacked the services of Fargo, and one or two other lesser lights, and, besides, appeared to be suffering slightly from unsettled nerves. The Scrub sent Johnny Thayer across the big team’s goal in the second half of the game, and was scored on thrice by the opponent.

Fargo sat on the bench, his left knee enormously

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bandaged and padded, and scowled darkly on the world. Report had it that the fullback would be all ready to play in Saturday's game if needed. As Saturday's contest, the next to the last on the Wyndham schedule, was with High Point School, he very likely would not be needed, for High Point was not a strong aggregation, and had been selected for that reason. To-day "Swede" Hanbury worked at fullback most of the time, being relieved by Massingham and Badger toward the last. There was not much choice evident, although Hanbury possessed the advantage over his competitors of being a good kicker. Scrub, still resentful over the loss of its coach, and reminded of the fact by the sight of "Cocky" devoting his energies to the First, played a bit more savagely this afternoon and neither asked nor gave mercy. But the First was undoubtedly suffering from an inferiority complex and offered almost nothing in the way of reprisal. Al Greene and Billy Desmond, between whom a friendly feud had existed all season, ended the game with the honors all Al's for the first time.

It was Billy who, in response to Tom's thirst for information, voiced the verdict of the First Wednesday evening. "Why," said Billy in the privacy of Number 34, accommodating his body with muffled groans to the peculiarities of the couch, "'Cocky's' all right, Tom. He goes at it differently from Otis, but he seems to know what he's doing and why he's doing it. And he doesn't mind you knowing, either. You see, 'G. G.' never would let any one in on his plans. 'G. G.'

“COCKY” MAKES A CALL

was the Big Cheese, and you weren't supposed to ask questions or want to know how come. Now 'Cocky' let's every one in on things. Maybe it doesn't make us play any better, but it let's us think we're more than just so many machines without anything above the boilers! He's having us up in the rowing room before practice to talk things over. Of course, he does most of the talking—he and Dave, and sometimes Stoddard—but we like it.”

“You'd better,” said Tom. “‘Cocky's' a grand coach, and a sight better than you guys deserve. Heck, he knows more real inside football than 'G. G.' ever thought of!”

“Quit your kidding,” growled Billy. “He's all right, just as I told you, but he isn't the coach 'G. G.' is. And any one casting asparagus on 'G. G.' will have me on his neck.”

“Oh, well, he's all right,” acknowledged Tom. “Say, what do they hear about him, Billy?”

“Otis? Nothing except that he's getting along all right so far. I guess he's just got a thundering fine case of the 'flu,' and you can be beastly sick with it, and not worry your doc a mite. I know. I had it.”

When Mr. Babcock went to the First Team he took Loring's play with him, and on Wednesday evening he dropped in at Loring's room after supper and told him so. “It's promising,” he declared, “and I mean to make use of it, Deane, if I can get the fellows to make it go as it should. It's got to be pulled off at the right moment, under the right conditions.” He went

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quite exhaustively into that. "And," he continued, "it's like any play in which so many are involved: you can't blunder it. If every man isn't just where he should be at the proper instant it will fizzle badly. I'm not going to try it against High Point because, if it is a find, I want to spring it fresh against Wolcott. And Wolcott may have some one looking on here Saturday; looking for us to try out some eleventh hour stunt like that. I've told the Scrub to keep away from it. Jackson wanted to use it next Saturday against the Wolcott Scrub, but that wouldn't do."

"Mr. Babcock," asked Loring, "do you know why Wolcott hasn't used Grosfawk more this season?"

"No, I don't. That's puzzled me a little, too. I haven't seen his name more than twice all the fall, and last year he looked like a real find. I presume Mr. Otis had some information on Grosfawk, but I don't know a thing. Anyhow, we've laid our lines for that chap, and he will be watched pretty closely. But Wolcott hasn't showed much in the overhead game so far, and maybe she's intending to use it only as a last resort."

"She hasn't shown it in public, sir," said Loring, "but she's practiced forward-passing ever since she started work."

Mr. Babcock looked interested. "Is that so? How did you learn that, Deane?"

Loring indicated a binder filled with newspapers that lay on a chair nearby. "I've been reading the Wolcott football stuff in the papers, sir. Their correspondent

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is pretty close-mouthed, but he lets something out now and then. I've been all through the papers from the seventeenth of September to yesterday, and I've learned two or three rather interesting things, Mr. Babcock. One is that Wolcott's been using the forward-pass in practice, although in outside games she's made only about fourteen passes in all, an average of a little over two to a game. But the important thing, sir, is that out of those fourteen ten were successful. That's an unusual average, isn't it?"

"Decidedly! What were they, Deane, long or short?"

"Both, apparently. I couldn't always make out which they were. But they went all right in nearly every case, and that's something to think about, Mr. Babcock."

"It's something to think a whole lot about," was the answer. "Did Grosfawk figure in any of those plays?"

"Not one, sir."

"Cocky" stared thoughtfully at Loring and Loring looked thoughtfully back at him. Finally: "Hm," said the instructor. "What do you make of that? Do you suppose Grosfawk petered out this year? He's rather a youngster, I believe, and it may be he couldn't find himself."

"What I think, sir, is that he got hurt, hurt badly enough to keep him from hard work." Loring took a slip of paper from his leather wallet. "Grosfawk's name appears eight times in the stories written for the paper by the Wolcott correspondent up to October

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Fifth. After that it doesn't appear at all. The Fifth of October was Friday, and Wolcott played Nelson the next day. Wolcott won by 23 to 6, or something like that. It was a slow game and Wolcott used a whole string of substitutes in the last half. But she didn't use Grosfawk. Grosfawk was spoken of in the paper as having taken part in practice on Thursday. Now I think something happened either Thursday or Friday. Either he got hurt or he got in wrong with the faculty over studies. Up to that Fifth of October, the fellow who writes the stuff for the paper was always mentioning him. Once he spoke of him as 'Wolcott's spectacular end,' and another time as 'the speedy runner who grabbed last year's game from Wyndham,' or something like that. Then he drops him entirely!"

"All that is food for thought," replied Mr. Babcock, smiling. "I dare say that you've figured it correctly, Deane, but, just for the sake of argument, what about this theory? Suppose they've kept on using Grosfawk in practice and have carefully kept his name out of the papers with the idea of letting us think he isn't to be bothered about. You know he *has* played occasionally."

"Mighty little, sir. Maybe five times, and then only for a few minutes, probably."

"Still—"

"Besides, sir," interrupted Loring eagerly, "if Wolcott wanted us to think that Grosfawk was—was eliminated she would have used more certain methods, don't you think? Wouldn't she have let the report get out

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that he had been injured or that he was in Dutch with the Office or—or something? See what I mean, sir? She couldn't be certain that we'd notice his not playing."

"Yes, probably she would have," acknowledged the other. "Well, granting your idea's the right one, Deane, who do you take it is to get Grosfawk's job at catching passes and getting off with them? Or who has got it already?"

Loring shook his head. "That's what I can't make out, sir. They've been building up a forward-passing game in secret, but the reports from there don't actually say so. You've got to read between the lines. In the outside games five players have taken passes, and only one of them, Loomis, is mentioned more than the others. Loomis is their regular left end. He was on their team last year, and fellows I've talked with say he wasn't much of a player."

Mr. Babcock was silent for a long moment. Then he asked briskly: "Think you could get to Cotterville next Saturday, Deane?"

CHAPTER XXI

SCRUB VERSUS SCRUB

“**M**E, sir!” Loring looked startled.

“I suppose you couldn’t. I forgot for the moment that you can’t get about as easily as the rest of us. It only occurred to me that, knowing what you do already, Deane, you’d be just the fellow. But never mind. I’ll find some one.”

“Why, I could go, Mr. Babcock,” said Loring eagerly. “It—it sort of surprised me, that was all. And I’m not sure that I could do what you’d want, sir.”

“I think you could. You see, I don’t want a report on the playing. I just want you to look around over there and see what goes on. There may be a nigger in the wood-pile, or there may not. If there is, you may not spot him, but it’s worth trying; and you’re the man for the job since you know the situation better than any of us. See who they use as substitutes and try to figure out why. If your hunch is the right one, Deane, they’ve got an end or a back over there that they’ve been keeping under cover. Look for him.”

“Yes, sir. It’s sort of like spying, though, isn’t it?”

“We call it scouting. It’s quite legitimate. They do it, and we do it, just as all the schools and colleges do, and they’ll expect us to have scouts there to-morrow

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just as we expect them to have scouts here. In fact, I think I'd tell them that you're from Wyndham. Maybe they'll get you a good place to see from."

"That's one difficulty," said Loring. "I'll have to go over by automobile, and I suppose I couldn't get near enough to see much without getting out."

"Unless they've changed their arrangements there," replied the instructor, "you are allowed to park on one side of the field, and if you got there early enough you could pretty near have your choice. I'll see about a car—"

"No, please, sir! Wattles will attend to that. I'd a great deal rather not have you or any one pay for anything, Mr. Babcock."

"But, Deane, the Athletic Association is perfectly able to stand the expense, and it's only fair that it should. An automobile will cost twenty dollars or so, I imagine, and there's no reason why you should pay it."

"I'd rather, if you don't mind, sir," Loring persisted.

"Well, suit yourself. I'll see you again on Friday and we'll talk it over before you go. By the way, you'd better have some one with you, hadn't you?"

"I'll take Wattles, sir. Good night, and thanks for bothering with that play."

"If it works as I hope it's going to, Deane, thanks will be going the other way. Good night."

The second cheer meeting—there had been one on the eve of the Toll's game—was held Thursday after study hour, and some new songs were tried out—Mr.

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Parks at the piano—and some old ones were resung. And, of course, there was a good deal of enthusiasm and noise. There was another and even more demonstrative affair Saturday evening, at which Mr. Babcock and Mr. Clendenin, who was Chairman of the Athletic Committee, and Captain Dave spoke, but before that other events transpired.

The Scrub got badly mauled on Thursday, for the First Team, recovering its self-esteem and poise, went after revenge. Yet the Fighting Scrub proved once again its right to the nickname and the nine points scored by the adversary were hard earned. Loring's forward-pass play—known now as Number 30—was twice used by the First, the second time for a long gain that led to the field-goal. This in spite of the fact that the Scrub knew the play and was watching for it. Friday was another hard day, for "Cocky" was driving the team with Wolcott in mind and making no preparations for the next day's visitors. There was only one period of scrimmaging, but it lasted fifteen minutes and held at least one spectacular incident. That was Clif's interception of Ogden's forward-pass. Ogden, a second-string half, was being tried out at fullback and was making a good impression. Ogden, while not so heavy as Hanbury or Badger, still had a good deal of weight and wore it where it did the most good when he hit the Scrub line. And Ogden was faster than any of the other candidates for the position of alternate to "Big Bill." That pass was made from kicking position after the First had hammered its way to the Scrub

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twenty-seven and two slams at the line had yielded but four yards. It was a quick, short heave over right tackle and was meant for Stiles or Archer, the latter having lately displaced Couch at left end, but Clif had swept around back of his line with the snapping of the ball, for "Wink" Coles had "called" the play, and it was Clif, and neither Whitemill nor Archer who was on the spot when the pass went over. Clif made the catch while still going at brisk speed and he kept on going, heading first for the side-line and then turning in. Since the First Team left end and right half were already out of the way, he had only Stoddard and Ogden to challenge him at first. But by the time he was well straightened out, running some five yards inside the border, Cotter, First's speedy left tackle, had taken up the chase. Cotter soon distanced the others, and it was he who finally threw Clif out of bounds at the First's thirty-eight. That the Scrub only got five yards more in three downs spoke well for the big team's defense. "Sim" Jackson's toss to Adams grounded and First took the pigskin. But Clif had covered some forty-eight yards in that romp of his, and, back in the gymnasium, once more enjoyed the applause of his teammates.

There were two games played on Wyndham Field on Saturday. At two o'clock the Wyndham and Wolcott Scrub Teams met and, since the High Point contest was not to begin until three, the School surrounded the farther gridiron and cheered lustily for the Scrub. When it was obliged to leave in order to be present at

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the kick-off of the more important contest the score was 7 to 7, the third period was a minute or two old and it was anybody's game. There were some staunch supporters, however, who remained until the last, and they were well repaid, for it was the final fifteen minutes that held the real thrills.

Both Wyndham and Wolcott were reduced to line-ups largely composed of substitutes by that time, for the game had been a hard-fought and not over gentle affair. Although they were but Second Teams and no championship depended on their efforts, they were still Wyndham and Wolcott, rivals always. Each team played not for its own honor but for the honor of its School, and mighty deeds were performed before the question of supremacy was settled. At 7 to 7 the battle had waged into the third period and through it, and at 7 to 7 the last quarter had started. Then, when some three minutes had gone by, Wolcott's brown-stockinged horde swept into its stride and, strengthened by the return of several first-string men who had been deposed in the first half, slammed its way down to the home team's twenty-five-yard line. There the ball was lost only to be recovered again. From the thirty-two Wolcott started once more and tore forward. "Babe" Ridgway, who had stuck it out under a grueling attack through three busy periods, had to give way finally to Pat Tyson, and Pat was responsible for an advance that took Wolcott from the twenty-eight to the sixteen yards. Wyndham steadied then and held, momentarily, but when the enemy had reached the ten

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yards it was not to be denied, and at last, when two smashes at the center had netted but three, the Wolcott right half took the ball on a cross-buck and plunged inside Jimmy Ames for a first down. Three more plays put the pigskin across.

The period was fully half over and those six points looked enough to spell victory for the visitor, but the Fighting Scrub couldn't spell that way. Scrub set itself to dispute the try-for-point, and when Al Greene strode over the sprawling body of his adversary and plunged toward the kicker that youth hurried his effort. The ball didn't miss the goal by many inches, but miss it did, and the Fighting Scrub gave voice to joy and stumbled back to positions. Mr. Conover shuffled his men then. Tyson crossed over to right tackle and "Wink" Coles went to center. Hoppin replaced Thayer and Patch took Clif's place. And with that final change "Steve" shot his last bolt. He hadn't a single available player left to call on! But Wolcott didn't know that.

Wyndham's chance didn't come along until the period was twelve minutes old. Then desperate, but still believing in its ability to even the score, "Sim" Jackson, who had spent the third quarter on the bench, dug deeply into his small bag of tricks and, finding nothing much there, used what was left. It wasn't much of a trick, either, but it served. The Fighting Scrub tore itself literally in half and the two halves hugged the side-lines. The ball went with the left portion of the team. Wolcott moved this way and that, momentarily at a loss how to meet the extraordinary formation.

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That wide-open space in the middle of the field held a strong attraction for the visitor, and, although it finally divided its defense just as Wyndham had divided its attack, it was evident that the opening was much on its mind. The handful of Wolcott adherents and players on the side-line howled derision. Then "Wink" passed the ball at an angle to Heard, a back across the field started with the ball and ran toward his own goal, and Wolcott became loudly vocal with warnings and advice and swarmed in the direction of the ball. Heard stepped back and back, facing the middle of the field. Then, when further delay meant danger, he swung half about and threw the ball to his left. Jeff Adams, who had skirted around close to the side-line and was now well away, put up a pair of long arms and a pair of large, eager hands and plucked the ball out of the air. After that, very soon after, he set out for Wolcott's goal as though he had important business somewhere in its vicinity!

But, although Jeff had a fair start, he wasn't swift enough to cover fifty-odd yards before the enemy overtook him. He did consume thirty-three or possibly thirty-four, however, and when a fleet-footed, brown-legged enemy banged him vindictively to earth he was on Wolcott's twenty-one! That bang was temporarily too much for Jeff and time was called while he was induced to put some air back into his lungs. Then, with the few Wyndham rooters that were present dancing about and waving sweaters and howling ecstatically, the Fighting Scrub returned to its struggle. It

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was fighting now not only against Wolcott but against time, for the final whistle wasn't far off. Every one knows that you can't use a trick play like that "split team" twice in succession and get away with it. Sim Jackson knew it. So he tried it again!

That is, he split the team as before, while Wolcott showed amazement plainly. The fool thing was a crazy quarterback trying it close to the twenty! Well, they knew what to expect this time and so, while their forwards watched their men their backs arranged themselves for a forward-pass. This time, naturally, Wolcott didn't waste three men to look after three of the enemy who were almost the width of the field from the ball. Wolcott put its strength where the danger lay. Which was a fortunate thing for Wolcott, since no forward-pass was attempted and Hoppin, who carried the ball, would have gained much more than seven yards had the opponent divided its forward line evenly. But even seven yards is not to be sneezed at when it lays the ball close to the thirteen!

Wyndham closed up then and played rational football, and, with something under forty seconds left, cleared the goal-line in three plunges, beating the whistle by the tick of the watch. That touchdown—credit it to Stiles—tied the score, and when Lee Heard, plainly nervous, stepped far back to take the pass from "Wink" you could have heard a pin drop. Well, not just that, perhaps, for a pin doesn't make much sound when it strikes a football field, I suppose, and there was a good deal of noise from the First Team gridiron; but things

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were awfully quiet just then. Even the Wolcott players, prancing and edging, madly anxious to break through, said nothing! Then, when Heard had trod around for a moment back there, he held his arms out straight and—oh, well, he made the goal. There's no use in prolonging suspense. Wyndham won the game, completing her season with three victories, and a score or so of tired, dirt-stained boys hugged each other weakly and cheered the defeated rival.

Later, Clif and the others, refreshed and hurriedly rehabilitated, reached the other field in time to see the First play the final quarter of its game with High Point. It wasn't very interesting, and even if it had been the Scrub players were still too excited over their own triumph to find it so. Ostensibly they watched the First Team substitutes vainly try to add to the Dark Blue's score of 14 to 0, but actually they saw little that went on. They were going over the Wolcott Scrub contest almost play by play and deriving a soul-satisfying pleasure. The Fighting Scrub, however others might appraise it, thought very well of itself that Saturday afternoon!

CHAPTER XXII

THE SCRUB DISBANDS

NEITHER Clif nor Tom had more than a glimpse of Loring until late Sunday afternoon. Then Wattles found them both in Tom's room and announced that Loring would like to see them in front of East Hall.

"Have his folks gone, Wattles?" asked Tom.

"No, sir, not yet. I think Mister Loring wishes you to meet them, sir."

Tom exchanged glances with Clif and then grabbed his brushes and smoothed his hair into place. "We'll be right down, Wattles," he said. Wattles departed and Clif seized the brushes that Tom had abandoned in favor of a whisk. Finally, a trifle awed, they set forth. But neither Mr. Deane nor Mrs. Deane proved formidable. Loring's father was a tall, rather thin gentleman with a closely cropped gray mustache and pink cheeks, who looked more like an army man than the popular conception of a multimillionaire. He had a way of half closing his eyes when he smiled that was most engaging. Loring looked more like his mother, who, as Tom enthusiastically confided to Clif later, was "a pippin." They were still in the handsome big car that had aroused Clif's admiration several weeks

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before, and Loring sat between them. They had been to the shore for luncheon, Loring explained, and—

“Lobster,” said Mr. Deane, squinting his eyes in his funny way and sighing. “They were good, weren’t they, Lory? Um-m!”

“My dear,” chided Mrs. Deane, “do you think it’s kind to gloat over lobster before Clif and Tom? You don’t mind if I call you Clif, do you?” She smiled apologetically on Tom. “Loring speaks so often of you, you know.”

“No, ma’am,” stammered Tom.

“Perhaps Clif does, though,” laughed Loring. “You’ve got them mixed, mother.”

“Have I? Well, that’s your fault, Loring. Your introduction was so sketchy! Which of you is it who plays football so nicely?”

“Both of us, Mrs. Deane,” replied Clif daringly. “But I’m the one you had in mind.”

“Huh-huh,” chuckled Mr. Deane appreciatively. Mrs. Deane dimpled and then sighed.

“I’m afraid you’re making fun of me. Anyway, you’re both gorgeous looking boys, and I like you both for being so nice to my boy. And I’m coming up next Saturday—it is Saturday, isn’t it?—to see you play.”

“I hope you will,” said Tom intensely. “We won’t be playing, but it’s going to be a corking game, Mrs. Deane.”

“But I want to see *you* play,” she demurred. “And you.” She included Clif in her glance. “Perhaps, just as a favor to me, you will, won’t you?”

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Tom's mouth opened, but he didn't seem to be able to find anything to say. Then his eyes, wandering from Mrs. Deane, encountered Loring's grin and he got very red and made a choking sound. Clif came to his rescue. "We'll do our best," he laughed. "You see, we're only on the Scrub Team, Mrs. Deane, and it's the First Team that plays Wolcott. I hope you will come, too, sir."

"Eh?" said Loring's father. "Well, now, I don't know."

"I wish you would, dad," begged Loring.

"Well, I'll see, Lory. It seems to me, though, I've got something on Sautrday."

"Not a thing but a game of golf," said Mrs. Deane, "and if Loring wants you to come—"

"Yes, yes, my dear! Of course!" He winked slyly at Clif. "I daresay it will rain Saturday, anyway."

"It wouldn't be the first time you'd golfed in the rain," responded his wife severely. "But next Saturday, rain or shine, you are coming up here with me."

"Yes, my dear," he chuckled, "I'm sure I am. Boys, take the advice of a wise old man and don't marry a tyrannical wife!"

"No, sir," answered Tom promptly and earnestly. Whereat every one laughed and Wattles lifted Loring out and the big car rolled away.

Eager to hear what Loring had learned at Cotterville the day before, Clif and Tom hurried over to his room after supper. But only Wattles was there. Mister Loring, he explained, was visiting Mr. Babcock.

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Wattles's tone was rather impressive. Since that visit to Wolcott yesterday he had carried himself with added dignity, for was not he, too, concerned in matters of deep moment? Had he not taken a part, though a humble one, in diplomatic affairs? Always a model of discretion, to-night Wattles was discreeter than ever, and when Tom asked: "Did he find out anything, Wattles?" he glanced toward windows and doors before, lowering his voice to a confidential murmur, he answered: "Yes, sir. Something extremely important, Mister Kemble, but I am not at liberty to mention it, sir."

"Oh, roll your hoop," grumbled Tom. "I guess he will tell us, all right."

"Oh, yes, sir," agreed Wattles. "Quite so, sir."

But they didn't learn very much from Loring, after all, for "Cocky" had advised against it. He did tell them about the journey to Cotterville, in the same antiquated but efficient vehicle that had brought Tom back from Danbury, and how Wattles, learning something of the mission, had advised stopping en route and securing disguises, Wattles favoring for himself a voluminous beard. But as to what he had actually observed at the Wolcott game Loring was vague and reticent. Tom got a trifle huffy and said he guessed Loring hadn't found out anything much, anyway, if you asked *him!*

Monday morning Mr. Wyatt detained Tom after class and said: "At my suggestion, Kemble, the Faculty has released you from restrictions." If he had expected

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Tom to exhibit delight he was disappointed. Tom said "Thank you, sir," in a listless voice and looked a trifle bored.

"I hope," said the instructor, "the news hasn't displeased you?"

"Sir?" Tom viewed him questioningly. "Oh, no, sir." Then, recollecting that the removal of restrictions would enable him to see the Wolcott game, he added with a touch of animation: "It's great, Mr. Wyatt. I thought, maybe, I wouldn't get to Cotterville Saturday."

"I see. And, of course, you can play football again, Kemble."

"Not much use, sir. The team gets through Wednesday."

"Gets through? To be sure. So it does. Hm. I'd forgotten that." Mr. Wyatt looked so puzzled that Tom wondered. Tom didn't know, of course, that Mr. Babcock had dropped in on "Alick" last evening and that his, Tom's, affairs had come up for discussion; nor that Mr. Wyatt's puzzlement had to do with "Cocky's" efforts to secure the removal of restrictions from a boy whose football usefulness was practically at an end! "Well," continued the instructor, "I trust that hereafter—er—we shall not have to—" His thoughts returned to Mr. Babcock— "Hm, that will be all, Kemble."

"Yes, sir," said Tom, glad of release.

Coincidences do sometimes happen outside of fiction. Less than thirty seconds later, having reached the foot

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of the stairway, Tom almost collided with a hurrying figure.

"Hello!" said Mr. Babcock. "Almost had—is that Kemble?" He stopped abruptly in his long stride. "Look here, are you square with the Office?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Report to me this afternoon then."

"You mean—" Tom swallowed. "Yes, sir!"

"Come ready to play, Kemble." "Cocky's" voice came back from well down the corridor. "May be able to use you, young fellow!"

Well, things were happening strangely these days, thought Tom!

They went on happening that way at intervals, too. Tom joined the First Team squad on Monday. On Tuesday he played left half against his former companions of the Scrub, putting in almost as much time at that job as did Whitemill and getting off the one long forward-pass that secured any ground for the First. What it all meant Tom could guess as little as any one, with the probable exceptions of "Cocky" and Captain Dave. But the cat was out of the bag on Wednesday, and the heavens fell. I realize that the metaphors don't belong together, but each is satisfyingly apt.

On Wednesday the truth about "Big Bill" Fargo became known. He had been sent home Saturday on the advice of the school physician and now he was stretched out flat in some hospital with one knee entirely surrounded by plaster of Paris! Oh, he would be back

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in a week or two, but there wouldn't be any more football or basketball or hockey for "Big Bill" this winter. The fact that he would be back in a fortnight or less interested the School not a particle just then. Later it would consider that fact with gratification, but just now all that occupied its mind was that the Team had lost its best fullback in years, the one player who never got hurt, the man around whom the Team's attack had been carefully constructed! So when I say that the heavens fell I'm choosing my metaphor very carefully.

Until then Wyndham had still hoped to defeat her rival. The loss of Coach Otis had been a severe blow, but victory had remained a possibility in the judgment of most. But now—why, it wasn't worth talking about! That game was as good as played! Might just as well cheer Wolcott to-day and have it over with!

There were some who advocated forfeiting the game while there was still time, but this idea didn't meet with general approval, not even while the stunning effect of the blow was yet at its height. No, they'd play Wolcott and do the best they could. That was only sportsmanly. And maybe the poor, decrepit old Team would crawl out of the contest still recognizable to its closest friends! In any case, defeat was honorable if not desirable!

There was a good deal of talk during Wednesday and Thursday about Honor in Defeat, and the Last Ditch, and Going Through With It. Wednesday night's mass meeting was truly pathetic. "Shadowed

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Walls" sounded like a dirge when it was sung, and "Win! Win! Wyndham," for all of its volume, was less a cheer than an intoned elegy. It suggested renunciation but not defiance. Mr. Babcock's gravely cheerful remarks were applauded politely. The School appreciated his efforts but was not to be deluded. There were other speakers, too, and they wasted a lot of words, in the judgment of their hearers. What was the good of being hopeful when there wasn't any hope left?

But on Thursday evening the meeting was different. Though defeat was still accepted as inevitable, the notion of taking it lying down was no longer popular. The sentiment to-night favored getting in just as many good, hard licks as was possible before being counted out. There was still a strong "We who are about to die salute you" savor to proceedings, but the salutation was distinctly defiant. A courteous letter from the Wolcott Academy Athletic Association deploring the unfortunate loss to Wyndham of its Head Coach was read and almost moved the hearers to tears. Somehow, there seemed something quite touching in the idea of the lion sympathizing with its victim before devouring him! Wyndham cheered that letter to the echo.

The Scrub did not disband on Wednesday, according to custom, although Wednesday witnessed the final real game between it and First. At Mr. Babcock's direction the Scrub postponed dissolution for twenty-four hours and on Thursday lined up opposite the big team for some twenty minutes while the latter put the polishing

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touches on several plays, among them Number 30. Tackling was prohibited, and the somewhat ludicrous spectacle of Billy Desmond and Al Greene scowling darkly at each other without once coming to grips was presented. The captaincy of the Scrub had fallen to Johnny Thayer on Monday, and it was Johnny who gathered the team about him in the early twilight that Thursday afternoon and led the cheer.

“Win, win, Wyndham! Win, win, Wyndham! Win, win, Wyndham! Scrub! *Scrub!* SCRUB-U-UB!”

The First cheered then, and after that the Scrub cheered the First, and the audience cheered the Scrub and the Scrub cheered Mr. Connover, and Mr. Connover cheered—no, that isn't right! But there was a good deal of cheering and noise; and a good deal of laughter as the Scrub formed in line and, eighteen strong, marched off abreast behind a long strip of white oilcloth bearing the inscription in large black letters: THE FIGHTING SCRUB—The Team That Put the “Win” in Wyndham—Scrub 13; F. H. S. 0; —Scrub 26; T. A. 9—Scrub 13; W. 2nd 12—WE WERE GOOD AND WE ACKNOWLEDGE IT!

Clif held his breath and turned the cold full on, shivered deliciously as the icy water peppered his glowing body and broke into song:

“Whoop it up for Wyndham! Whoop it up loud!

Here we come on the run! Same old crowd!

What we did before, boys, we can do again!

W—Y—N—D—H—A—M!”

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Then he turned the shower off, reached for his towel and dried himself, avoiding the still trickling sprinkler above. Well, that was over! No more football until next fall. It was a sort of relief, too. There had been just about enough of it. Of course he would feel horribly lost for a week or so, but there were compensations. For instance, eats! For six weeks and more he hadn't had a piece of pie, and the pie at Wyndham was *good!* To-morrow he wouldn't have to pass his piece across to Crosby. No, sir. And he wouldn't have to think whether he ought to eat this, that and the other. No, sir, he'd just *eat* it!

There wasn't much drying necessary, and after a moment Clif wrapped the damp towel about him and padded his way along the wet tile floor to the locker-room. And there was Johnny Thayer, disgracefully unadorned, striding toward him and grinning like a catfish, and holding him with a glittering eye. Clif knew that something portentous was about to happen. He had one of Tom's "hunches." Johnny stayed him with two hands against his bare chest and spoke in in hoarse elation.

"You and 'Wink' and I go to the First! What do you know?"

"Ice-cold water on the head is good," replied Clif. But his levity was strained, for he knew that Johnny was talking true talk.

"It's gospel! 'Cocky' just told me. Ask 'Wink.' He's over there."

"Did he say me, too?" asked Clif, conscious of the

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fact that his heart was thumping as if he had just completed an eighty-yard run. Johnny nodded vigorously.

“The three of us, old ruffian! Ain’t it great? Gee, they have to come to the Fighting Scrub when they want real talent!”

“But, I don’t see— What’s the big idea? Where do I fit in? You and ‘Wink,’ sure, but me—”

“Oh, ‘Cocky’ ’ll find a use for you, Clif. Trust that old bird! Say, I’m tickled to death! Gee, why, we’ll get our letters, anyway; all three of us probably! What price me with a big blue W on my tummy?”

“Well, I don’t know, Johnny. We mightn’t. There’s a lot of fellows on that First Team squad now. I don’t see what he’s going to do with us all!”

“Feed us to Wolcott one at a time. Maybe ‘Cocky’s’ idea is to give Wolcott indigestion, eh? Anyway, I should concern myself. All I want is a chance at some of those big stiffs. That and my letter!”

Johnny strode gloriously on toward the showers and Clif mingled with the crowd that filled the locker-room. Oddly, no one took any notice of him; just as if he hadn’t been joined up with the First at all! But, he consoled himself, they probably hadn’t heard yet. He sought out Tom with his eyes and waved a brown stocking at him. Tom waved back, but it was evident that he didn’t know. His wave had been too casual. Clif chuckled and hurried his dressing. He would wait for Tom and tell him the thrilling news on the way to Hall!

CHAPTER XXIII

WYNDHAM PLAYS WOLCOTT

FRIDAY was an unreal sort of a day to Clif. He made a miserable fizzle of three recitations and conducted himself generally as though he was sleep-walking. It was only at three-thirty that he really became conscious. Then he came out of his trance and trotted around the field at the end of a line of seven third-string players, trying to get the signals right when Braley barked them. Two other squads indulged in the same recreation; and there were several fellows left out, at that, for the Wyndham First Team now consisted of thirty-seven players. Clif's squad was the last to quit signal drill, and after it was over he joined a dozen others and caught and threw the ball while the field gradually emptied. By five the last practice was over and the last player clumped across the running track and over the turf to the gymnasium leaving the field to darkness. Lights were already on in the gymnasium and East Hall when Clif and "Wink" left the gridiron.

That evening there was an hour of blackboard drill in the rowing room from seven-thirty to eight-thirty. Team members had been given study cuts since recitations had been abolished for Saturday. After drill

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Mr. Babcock brushed the chalk from his hands and spoke briefly. "I want every fellow to go from here right to his room," said the Coach. "At any rate, keep away from that cheer meeting over there. Read or talk for a while and then get to bed. Bedtime to-night is nine-thirty for all of you. No matter if you aren't sleepy. Get into bed and relax and try not to think about anything. That's the best way to get to sleep that I know of.

"We've got a hard job ahead of us, fellows, but we're equal to it. I tell you honestly that you're good enough to beat Wolcott to-morrow, if you'll do your best and fight hard. We've had our troubles here, as you know, but we've surmounted them all just as fast as they showed themselves. We've had to change our whole plan of battle at the last minute, but we've developed another plan that will answer fully as well. I don't want one of you to acknowledge to himself the possibility of defeat. I tell you you're going to win. But you've got to believe it yourselves, and you've got to *work*. Keep your thoughts right, fellows. Say to yourselves, 'I'm going to play harder to-morrow than I ever played in my life, just as all the others are going to, and together we're going to win!' Half the battle is in having faith. The other half is in doing. Cultivate the will to win. Now we'll go out quietly, with no cheering. We'll leave the cheering until to-morrow evening."

Over in assembly hall, Doctor Wyndham finished his speech by reading a letter from Coach Otis. It was

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only a few lines in length, predicting a Wyndham victory and counseling the School to stand firm behind the Team and show its faith. There were cheers for the Principal and for the absent coach and a big, long cheer for Wyndham, and then the meeting stampeded through the doors and down the hall and formed again outside and became quite mad. Clif and Tom, up in Number 17, stopped their talk and listened.

“Rah, rah, rah! Drayton!”

“Rah, rah, rah! Cotter!”

On they went, through the long list. *“Rah, rah, rah! Kemble!”* Clif grinned nervously. He was afraid they would cheer him and afraid they wouldn't. They did, at last. And they ended up with “Wink” Coles. After that there was a moment of confused shouting and then came a long cheer for the Team. Subsequently a strident voice began “Whoop It Up” and every one down there joined in and the bravely rollicking strains drowned Tom's statement that it was close to half-past and he guessed he'd better hit the hay. He waited until the song was over, humming the words softly, and then nodded and closed the door behind him. Alone, Clif sat for several minutes where Tom had left him while the sounds below quieted and died away. Finally he began to undress and discovered to his surprise that his fingers were trembling so that they made hard work of the buttons!

Clif didn't go to Cotterville with his father, although

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the latter appeared at Freeburg long before eleven o'clock. Trying hard to seem offhand and casual, Clif explained the circumstances, but he had to grin when Mr. Bingham jammed his thumb against the horn button and sent forth a strident wail that populated the steps of East and West Halls in something under three seconds.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Mr. Bingham. "Gosh, son, that's great news, isn't it? Aren't you mighty proud, eh? Hang it all, don't stand there and make believe you're not! I am, anyway. Yes, sir!"

Toot, to-o-o-ot! went the horn.

"Gee, dad, don't!" begged Clif. "The fellows'll think—"

"What if they do?" laughed his father. "I want them to!"

Mr. Bingham took Walter Treat and three other boys of Walt's choosing over to Cotterville, while Clif traveled in one of the three big busses that rolled away at twelve to the cheering of their companions, massed in front of West. Loring, declining Mr. Babcock's offer of transportation, was one of many youths who made the trip by auto in company with parents or friends. Loring rode between his father and mother, and Wattles sat with the chauffeur, who, to Wattles's disgust, knew no football save soccer. Wattles had a thoroughly pleasant ride, and by the time Cotterville was reached the chauffeur had become vastly better informed on one subject at least.

Clif and Tom had tried to stick together, but some-

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how in the confusion of departure they had got into different busses. Clif had Joe Whitemill and Phil Cotter for immediate neighbors. Phil was in rather hectic spirits and, claiming to have founded Cotterville, related many humorous and hitherto unpublished incidents connected with the early history of the town. He flatly refused, however, to accept responsibility for Wolcott Academy. That misfortune, he stoutly averred, had taken place during one of his absences from the old home.

The sun shone brightly, but there was a cold northwest wind blowing and much speculation was indulged in as to the effect of that wind on the kicking game. There was a good deal of discussion about Wyndham's chances, and what sort of a line Wolcott had and whether its ends were any better than last year's. And now and then they sang a little. But the singing soon petered out. Every fellow in the bus at one time or another fell into silent abstraction. Clif didn't say a great deal. His remarks were spasmodic and his laughter somewhat tuneless. Away down inside somewhere he was scared, and, while he assured himself countless times that there wasn't the ghost of a chance of his getting into the game, unless for a moment at the end that he might get his letter, at the back of his mind the thought persisted that he might be called on. He tried to remember the play numbers and discovered to his horror that he had forgotten nearly all! He finally got hold of the straight buck sequence, 2 to 5, but couldn't remember what 6 was. Nor 7. Nor 8—

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hold on, though, 8 was a cross-buck with left half carrying. Gradually memory returned, although to the end of the journey six plays eluded him. He might have asked Whitemill or Cotter, but he was ashamed to. Besides, there would be time enough on the bench in which to refresh his memory.

When the busses passed through a village there was loud cheering, not only for Wyndham but for anything else that captured interest. At Peyton a much bewhiskered citizen leaning against a post in front of the general store made an instant hit. Three royal cheers were given for "Ostermoor"—though how the fellows knew his name must remain a mystery—and the surprised gentleman was the recipient of many compliments. Between the villages opportunities for "razing" were fewer but never neglected. A faster car, passing a bus, was pursued by indignant cries of "Speedhound!" "Oooh, wait till I tell the Constabule!" "Hey, Mister! You're hittin' twenty!" "Oh, you Dare-devil!" "You pesky city folks, you!" All this, Clif found, helped you to forget that your luncheon, as light as it had been, had become a leaden lump and that there was a spot somewhere between the nape of your neck and the top of your head that felt like a small lump of ice!

At Cotterville they pulled up in front of a small yellow frame building at the edge of the athletic field. Across a wide stretch of still green turf the school buildings peered back at them from behind nearly leafless trees. It was twenty minutes past one then,

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and the game was to start at two-fifteen, but already there was a trickling stream of folks crossing the far side of the field in the direction of the iron stands. Many automobiles, too, were in place beyond the ropes, and the occupants were having picnic lunches there. Above the grandstand a big brown flag bearing a white W waved and whipped in the wind. The sun was doing its best for the occasion. It made the freshly drawn lines of the gridiron gleam, gave the dying grass a real semblance of summer verdancy, found a clump of birches on the nearby hillside that still held their leaves and made a golden splendor of them and, flashing against the varnished surfaces of the parked cars, created blobs of light that dazzled the eyes. And over there, too, it discovered a fluttering blue pennant bearing a white W and illumined it gloriously.

In the field house Dan Farrell, the trainer, laid out the contents of his bags and the haunting odor of his own special liniment permeated the quarters. The call to change into togs came at half-past one and at a quarter to two they were all ready. Mr. Babcock and Mr. Hilliard and Mr. Connover ended their low-voiced conference in a corner and herded the players outside to the sunlit porch. It wasn't one of the coaches, though, who spoke to them then. It was Captain Dave Lothrop, and partly because Dave never did say much and even now couldn't find the right words, although he tried hard enough, his little speech got under their skins. He didn't say anything new. Indeed, what is there new that may be said at such times? It has all

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been said over and over again, hundreds, thousands of times, since the first football team was formed. But Dave, floundering, seeking desperately for words, his eyes fixed on the barred field over yonder, managed to endow old sounds with a fresh meaning.

“Coach says we can do it, fellows,” said Dave. “He’s not lying to us. Besides, I know, too. I know that if we think—if we just *say* we can lick ’em—go out there and fight every minute, every second, just forgetting everything but beating Wolcott—why, I *know* we can, fellows! We’ve got to fight, fight *hard*. Well, we can do it. We’ve got to fight harder than they fight. We can do that, too. I—I wouldn’t want to lead you fellows out there if I wasn’t certain right down to my boots that you meant to lick those guys. Think what it would be like to go back to Wyndham to-night beaten. We couldn’t face the School! Why, hang it, we’ve *got* to win! That’s all there is to it. We’ve *got* to win! And when you’ve got to do a thing, you—you”—Dave’s gaze came back from the gridiron and challenged them—“you do it, if you’re not yellow! Well, that’s all. Only”—Dave shot out a big fist—“tell me this. Are you going to fight? Are you going to *win*?”

“*Yes!*” The reply was an explosion of pent-up emotions, a determined, defiant, exalted burst of sound that carried far across the sunlit field.

“*Come on, then!*” said Dave.

Twenty minutes later the gridiron was empty again.

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A silver half-dollar had spun into the sunlight and dropped to the turf. Captains and officials were back on the side-lines. The raucous blaring of the Wolcott Student Band was stilled, the cheering had momentarily hushed and the throng that filled every seat in the stand and overflowed along the ropes drew coats and wraps higher, resettled in their places and braced themselves for the fray. Then eleven brown-stockinged youths ran out from one side of the barred battlefield and eleven blue-stockinged youths from the other, and the cheers began again and the Wolcott bass-drummer thumped mightily and several thousand persons, many of them normally unemotional, experienced a sudden shortness of breath accompanied by a fluttery sensation of the heart. And at about that moment, on the east side of the field, a man in a black derby confided to a man in a chauffeur's livery that, "That's the captain of our side, Henry. Lothrop his name is. He's to kick the ball away."

"With them long legs, and the powerful looks of him," responded his companion with relish, "I'm thinkin' them other laddies'll be chasin' it back to the hills yonder!"

That no such performance as that was contemplated or desirable was being explained when the ball sailed up and away and the informant relapsed into silence. Somewhere at the north end of the field a player caught the pigskin, tucked it against him and went down before he had taken two strides. The Wyndham cheers burst forth, high and sharp. Wolcott tried the Wynd-

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ham left and was repulsed, shot her fullback at Desmond and got three yards and then punted far, the wind that quartered the gridiron adding a good ten yards to the kick. Wyndham ran the ball back six yards or so, tried two slams at the brown line and punted back to Wolcott's forty. The ancient enemies were trying each other out.

Wolcott got three yards outside Cotter and two more through Captain Dave, but a five-yard penalty set her back and again she punted on third down. This time the ball rolled over the line. Jensen got free around Wolcott's left end and carried the pigskin on the first down to the twenty-eight yards. Ogden, from kicking position, tried a straight buck on right tackle and was thrown for a yard loss. Jensen made two outside left tackle and Ogden punted short to midfield, where the ball went out. Not until the quarter was almost over did either team bid for a score. Then Wolcott tried a short forward-pass over the center that grounded and followed it from the same formation with a fake that sent left half around the right for fourteen yards and placed the ball on Wyndham's twenty-eight. A cross-buck on Cotter failed of an inch and Wolcott again threw forward. This time the throw was long, fast and low and aimed at the corner of the field. Over there, close to the goal-line, the Brown's left halfback turned as the pigskin sped forward. Four strides would have taken him across, but, although he had skillfully eluded the Wyndham defense until now, Nemesis, in the form of Pete Jensen, was at hand, and while Pete

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couldn't get in position to steal the catch he could and did bat the ball aside.

With two downs left, Wolcott sent her fullback outside right tackle from kicking position and gained four yards, placing the ball on the twenty-four. From the thirty-three, with quarterback holding the ball, Johnson, Wolcott's rangy left tackle, tried a goal from placement while the Wyndham cohorts held their breaths. Johnson had the quartering gale to figure with, and it seemed that he underestimated the force of it, for the pigskin, while it started true enough, met the full strength of the wind before it had covered half the distance and swerved widely to the left. Not until an official waved his arms negatively, though, was Wyndham certain that the effort had failed.

A minute later, after Wyndham had punted, the whistle blew and the teams made for the water pails. The Wolcott band came to life again, and the cheer leaders swung their megaphones. Then Wyndham took the north goal and faced the enemy on the thirty-nine yards. There were no changes in the Wyndham line-up. Archer and Drayton were still the ends, Cotter and Weldon the tackles, Lothrop and Desmond the guards, Carlson the center, Stoddard the quarter, Whitemill and Jensen the halves and Ogden the fullback. Nor had Wolcott yet altered her team. The opposing elevens were strikingly alike in appearance. Each presented a center trio of big, fairly heavy men closely matched for height and weight. Each featured fast, rangy tackles and rather light ends. In the back-

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field Wolcott had a slight advantage in weight, for James, her fullback, was a fellow after "Big Bill" Fargo's style, although he lacked Fargo's ability to start quickly and was far less dangerous on end runs. Wolcott's quarter had weight and carried the ball frequently. Her halfbacks were fairly light and showed speed. One, Hoskins, had already proved himself a very shifty player.

The second period saw a good deal of old-fashioned football on the part of Wolcott and a punting game on the part of the opponent. Wolcott used straight plunges and slants with sufficient success to take her to the Blue's thirty-six yards. There her gains lessened and two sweeping plays and two forward-passes took her no further than the twenty-seven, where she yielded the ball. Hoskins was the Brown's forward-pass ace, but Hoskins was so closely watched that he was unable to show anything. Wyndham punted on second down and watched for a break. With that wind quartering the field a fumble by a Wolcott back would have surprised no one. But the break didn't come. Wolcott declined to catch the punts after two narrow escapes and the ball was allowed to roll, twice going over the goal line for touchbacks. Four penalties were handed out by the referee, two to each team, but none affected the fortunes of the game appreciably. The whistle ended the half fifty-two minutes after the kick-off.

CHAPTER XXIV

WATTLES AGREES

THE teams trailed off and the rival cheering sections became concertedly vocal once more. One had to either cheer or sing if only to keep warm! The Wolcott songsters followed the band through a martial effort that wasn't a great success because most of the fellows had forgotten the words and sang "dum-ti-dum-dum" instead. Then Dodson, Wyndham cheer captain, tossed aside his big blue megaphone and threw his arms aloft.

"Let's have 'We Beat Her,' fellows! Everybody into it and make it snappy. All right! '*We-e-e—*'!"

Whereupon the visiting contingent answered with their latest effusion, sung to the tune of a popular ballad of the year:

"We beat her back in '16, in '17 once more;
We swamped her in '20 with a sixteen-nothing score!
We beat her in '21 when she couldn't hold the ball,
But this year, on her own field, we'll beat her worst
of all!"

Wyndham had no band to aid—or hinder—but she made the welkin ring. Dodson, white-sweatered, leaped and danced and kept time with waving arms

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and swaying body. "Great! Once more now! All sing!" They responded valiantly, louder than before since many, previously silent, found courage and lifted their voices. Wolcott applauded and laughed and came back with a derisive composition in which "Wyndham" was insultingly punned with "wind 'em."

Across the field, Mr. Deane lighted a fresh cigar and said: "Well, it looks as if they'd pulled that fellow's teeth, eh? What'shisname, I mean."

"Hoskins?" asked Loring. "Yes, I don't believe he will trouble us much, father. Mr. Babcock set two men to covering him and he hasn't got away with anything yet. What Wolcott may do, though, is fake a throw to Hoskins and send the ball the other way. That might catch us napping."

"How did you spy that fellow, Lory?"

"They ran him on near the end of last week's game. Wolcott had scored a touchdown and a field-goal in the first half and sent her first-string men off to the showers. After that she couldn't do much. The other team got scrappy and held Wolcott twice inside its twenty yards. I think Wolcott thought she ought to have one score at least to show for the last half and took a chance. Anyway, after she'd used up two downs over there near the twenty-five-yard line she called Hoskins in, and he sifted through on the first play and trotted down to the corner of the field, just as he did a few minutes ago. The ball went right into his hands and he stepped over the line for a touchdown. Then he was taken right out again. I saw the trainer hand

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him his sweater and send him back to the gym. That was all I needed to see, sir.”

Mr. Deane chuckled, and Mrs. Deane said admiringly: “I think that was very, very clever, dear.”

“Thanks, moms, but it really wasn’t. Any one could have called the turn. I suppose they thought we didn’t know that they’d been working up that forward-passing stuff under cover. They’d kept it pretty well hidden. If they had thought twice, though, they wouldn’t have shown their hand like that.”

“It’s safe to say they wish they hadn’t,” chuckled Mr. Deane. “I suppose they’re wondering now what happened, eh?”

“They know what happened,” laughed Loring, “but it’s a bit late! I wish we had managed to get one score in that half, though. Wolcott will come back pretty hard, I guess.”

Both teams had made changes when they faced each other once more. For Wyndham, Williams was at left end, Couch at right end, Higgs at center, Breeze at right guard and Houston at quarter. The Blue chose the north goal and kicked off to Wolcott. The wind had decreased perceptibly and grown flukey, and Ogden’s kick-off went out of bounds on Wolcott’s twenty-seven yards. Three minutes later the Brown had crossed the middle of the field and taken the pig-skin into Wyndham territory. Faking a forward-pass, she sent her left half, a fresh player who had relieved Hoskins, on a wide run around the right end. Couch was neatly boxed and the ball went to the thirty-

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four yards. Wolcott was going now. Concentrating on the Wyndham left, she made first down on the twenty-two, sending Cotter out of the game. Longwell took his place. Wolcott tried Longwell and made a scant two. A short heave over tackle on the right bounded out of the catcher's hands, was fumbled by Ogden and grounded. With eight to go on third down, Wolcott elected to try a field goal. She attempted one more smash first, though, and pulled in another two yards through Captain Lothrop. Then the ball shot back to her right tackle, who had retreated to the twenty-nine yards, and, although the Wyndham forwards tore through desperately, arose again safely and sailed squarely across the bar for the first score.

The Brown's adherents went wild with joy, the big drum boomed, and automobile horns blared stridently. Wyndham's cheer, though, was loud and undismayed as the teams went back to midfield. Wolcott kicked off. Houston caught, juggled for a heart-breaking instant, dodged the first Wolcott end and then plunged straight ahead. A second tackler tried, missed and went down. A hasty interference formed about the runner, Weldon in the lead, mowing down the enemy. At the thirty-six yards, forced away from his interference, Houston was pulled to earth after a stirring run of thirty yards.

Wyndham kept the ball to Wolcott's thirty-nine, Ogden and Jensen alternating at slants that tore off four, five, once eight yards. On the enemy's thirty-

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nine an off-side penalty set the Blue back and, after two plunges that netted little, Ogden punted to the Brown's five. The Wolcott quarter refused the catch and the ball bounced erratically back in the direction it had traveled. Weldon put it down on the fourteen yards. Wolcott tried one off-tackle play from kick formation and gained three. Then she punted, James, her fullback, standing close to the five yards. Lothrop broke through and hurried the kick and the pigskin went high and was shortened by the wind. Jensen caught close to the side-line on Wolcott's thirty-two, made three and was thrown out.

The Blue took up her journey again, a short pass, Ogden to Houston, yielding seven yards and Ogden carrying the ball through the right side for a first down. Wyndham cheerers were chanting "Touchdown, Wyndham! Touchdown, Wyndham! Touchdown, Wyndham!" Wolcott asked for time and put in a fresh left guard. Ogden ran up against a stone wall on the next play and Jensen was nabbed trying to slide off left tackle, and Captain Lothrop stepped back to the thirty and held out his hands. When the ball came he plunged straight ahead and got four through the center. Tom Kemble reported and Whitemill went off. Tom went back to kick. Higgs passed badly and the ball reached him on the ground. There was no time to straighten up and get the kick off, for Wolcott was piling through on him. So Tom thumped the ball to his stomach and started off to the right. He dodged one enemy, squirmed free of another, turned sharply in, twisted

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and turned and finally went down. He had added three yards, but three was not enough.

Wolcott decided to punt out of danger on first down and James went back to the four yards. This time it was the Wolcott center who offended, and the ball reached the fullback above his head. He caught it, but both Lothrop and Weldon had broken through and were bearing down on him on each side. The ball went no farther than Weldon's upflung arm and then bounded back. James was down, but a Wolcott halfback won the race to the ball, picked it up on the bound and sought to circle the goal. Dave Lothrop brought him down just short of the line and Wyndham had a safety, two points to flaunt against Wolcott's three!

Wolcott kicked from the thirty-yard line, and the quarter ended after Kemble had caught on his own thirty-two and carried the ball to the thirty-seven.

For the last period Wyndham had the wind against her, but it was now little more than a strong breeze, and occasionally the big brown flag above the grandstand fell limply about the staff. More changes were made by Mr. Babcock. Archer went back at left and Carlson at center. Raiford took Weldon's place, Sproule went in at right half and "Swede" Hanbury relieved Ogden. Wyndham made four changes in her line, sending back three veterans of the first half, and introduced a fresh quarter.

Wyndham reached midfield on six plays, only to lose the ball when Sproule fumbled. Wolcott was then

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first down on her own forty-eight yards. On the first play a penalty for holding set her back to her thirty-three. A long pass over the right end went astray and a second attempt on the other side was no more successful. James punted short and the ball went out at Wyndham's forty-seven. Breeze was taken off and Clem Henning succeeded him at right guard. Sproule got free outside tackle and took the ball to the opponent's forty-one. Hanbury made three and then four over right tackle. Kemble was thrown for a loss on an attempt at the Wolcott left end and Hanbury punted. The ball went over and was brought back to the twenty.

Wolcott was playing for time now, satisfied, it seemed, with her one-point lead. She made it first down on her thirty-two with a short and unexpected forward toss and then, faking a second throw, tore through Henning for six. Hanbury, who made the tackle, was hurt and time was called. Presently he went off, assisted, and Johnny Thayer raced on. Wolcott struck a snag on the next play and lost two yards. A forward-pass over left guard grounded, after being juggled by half the players, and James kicked. Again the punt fell short and the ball was Wyndham's on her forty-four yards. Raiford gave way to "Wink" Coles and Couch to Clif Bingham.

The Blue crossed the half-way mark on two plays with Johnny Thayer carrying, each play a fake cross-buck in which the halfbacks went outside tackle and the fullback drove straight through guard. Wyndham had used few split interference plays so far and Wol-

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cott was easy prey; Johnny got four yards through right guard and seven through left. Kemble crashed at left tackle for three more and then went outside the same player for four. Thayer added two through center, and, with less than one to go on fourth down, Houston cut through left guard for the distance. Sproule again got loose around his left and reached the enemy's twenty-six before he was forced over the line. Thayer made two and Kemble two and Houston went back to kicking position. The play was a short pass, however, and Clif, on the catching end, failed to get his fingers on it. Time was called for Captain Dave and, after Dan Farrell had worked over him, Wyndham took a two-yard penalty, Captain Dave staying in. Houston took a good pass from Carlson and got the ball away cleanly, but it fell short of the bar.

Time was growing short and the figures on the scoreboard looked to be final. James punted on first down and put the oval down near the opponent's forty-five, his longest punt of the day. Tom Kemble misjudged and Houston got the ball on the bound and was thrown savagely on his thirty-six. Time was again called, and when play was resumed, Stoddard was back at quarter. Wolcott had seized the opportunity to bolster up her line with a new tackle and end on the left. Stoddard used a fake cross-buck again and Thayer found a wide hole at the left of center and romped through for twelve yards. On a similar play he was downed on the line. There were two minutes left.

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Kemble tried the end and made a yard and Sproule had no better luck off tackle. Kemble went back and hurled across the center to Stoddard for eight yards and a first down. With Kemble back again, the ball went to Thayer, and Johnny got six on a sweep around right end before he was smothered. Sproule and then Kemble hit right guard and made it first down again. The ball was on Wolcott's thirty-one yards and there was just under a minute of playing time left.

Captain Lothrop went out, cheered to the echo, and Smythe took his place. Ellison went in for Carlson and Treader for Sproule. Wyndham was still cheering valiantly, hopefully. Treader, squandering all the pent-up energy and longing of the afternoon in one brief instant, dashed himself fiercely at the enemy's right and squirmed and fought through to the twenty-six. Wyndham roared in triumph and automobile horns sounded raucously.

"Touchdown! Touchdown!" chanted Wyndham, while Wolcott implored her warriors to *"Hold 'em! Hold 'em! Hold 'em!"* Then Tom again went back and the visiting cheerers changed their slogan. *"Kick that goal! Kick that goal!"* was the cry now. Out on the field the effect was only of so much sound, confused, meaningless, and Houston had to shout high to be heard.

"30, 87, 27!"

Archer swung away from the line and ran back toward his own goal. Tom held his long arms out.

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The timer's watch told twenty seconds left. The signal came again:

"30, 87—"

The ball left Ellison and sped back to Tom. Archer swung to the left and crossed behind. Tom, too, was running that way now, the ball before him, and so were Treader and Houston, and so carefully were they spaced that not one of the enemy save the left end saw the ball pass from Tom to Archer behind that moving screen. But that left end, coming through inside Clif Bingham, was not able to use his knowledge to advantage, for Treader crashed into him and he went down, sprawling in the path of the runners. The Wolcott right end, speeding around, met Thayer, and that fact kept him, too, forever out of the play. Treader and Houston swept on around the right, but Tom, slackening speed, tarried while Archer, still running toward the side-line, found his position for the throw. Then a Wolcott tackle came plunging up, and Tom had his work cut out for him. As he and the brown-stockinged foe met, Archer dropped his right arm behind his shoulder, swept it forward again and threw, straight and hard, down the field from the thirty-six yards.

No one had seriously interfered with Clif when the ball had been snapped. Dodging wide, he had let the Wolcott left end past inside him. Then, warily, as though only desirous of avoiding the rough encounters behind, he sped none too hurriedly across three white marks. The Wolcott left halfback started toward him, but after one stride changed his course. To him the

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play was what it seemed, a fake kick and a wide sweep about the left of his line, and he hurried up to get into it. Midway between the five-yard-line and the ten Clif stopped and swung about. If the play had been timed right the ball should be already on its way. It was. So, too, was the Wolcott quarterback, and, further away, others. But the ball came faster than they, and it came true.

Clif set himself, held his hands out for it, felt it thump into them, tightened his clutch about it, turned and ran. There was but one white mark to cross before the goal-line, and he had spurned it before the enemy reached him. Then came the supreme test. The Wolcott quarterback launched himself forward, but Clif had anticipated the tackle by the fraction of a second. He twisted to the right, perilously close to the side-line, spun, saw the enemy go sprawling past, hands clutching, emptily, leaped the falling body and was safe. There was the last white streak a stride away and he had crossed it before the second enemy reached him, crossed it and dropped to earth, the battered ball held tightly wrapped in his arms!

The Wyndham Team held its banquet on Wednesday night at the Inn. There were many speeches made and many songs sung, and a whole batch of congratulatory messages were read by Captain Dave. There was one from Coach Otis and another from "Big Bill" Fargo amongst them. Nearly forty persons occupied the three big tables that had been placed end to end,

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but all were not team members. Besides the coaches, and Dan Farrell, the trainer, and Mr. Frost, representing the Faculty, there was a boy in a wheel chair. Several speakers of the evening had done their best to embarrass this guest; notably Mr. Babcock who had gone into sickening details in his account of how Wyndham had spiked Wolcott's guns. But Loring bore up very well, for, after all, he was only human, and he *had* done his bit toward that 8 to 3 victory. They sang that charming ditty "We Beat Her" several times, though now the last line had been altered to "And what we did last Saturday we'll do again next fall!" And finally they sang "Shadowed Walls," all standing, and cheered for Wyndham—the long cheer with nine booming "Wyndhams" on the end—and broke up.

Wattles, waiting outside the door, took charge of Loring, and the wheel chair trundled along Oak Street with Clif on one side and Tom on the other. Ahead of them and behind echoes of the evening sounded. Carlson and Jensen, arms entwined, confided to a star-sprinkled sky that "We beat her back in '16." Farther behind a cheer arose. Tom, who had emptied the contents of a dish into a pocket before leaving, shared salted nuts with the others. Wattles's refusal to partake availed him nothing. Tom stopped traffic while he filled Wattles's mouth, and for some distance Wattles couldn't have spoken had he wanted to.

"Wonder who they'll elect Saturday," mused Clif a moment later.

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“Houston or Ogden,” said Tom. “Say, look here, you fellows! Here’s something I’ve had on my mind for days. How—”

“Where did you say you’d had it, Tom?” asked Loring. “I’m afraid I didn’t hear you right.”

“Shut up. Say, how many of the old Scrub fellows do you think were on the team when we made that touchdown?”

“Four,” said Loring. “You, Clif, Thayer—”

“Wrong, old son! Five! Count ’em! Five! Clem Henning—”

“Oh, well,” objected Clif, “he was off the Scrub long before—”

“Doesn’t matter! And who won their old game, anyway? Why, the old Scrub won it! Henning was right guard, ‘Wink’ was right tackle, Johnny took the pass from center, Clif made the touchdown and I—er—supervised it! Now, then, I ask you, who won the old ball game?”

Three voices answered loudly, proudly and in chorus “*The Fighting Scrub!*” And—

“Hooray!” said Wattles, still articulating with difficulty. “Quite so, sir!”

(1)

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